

THE LONDON READER

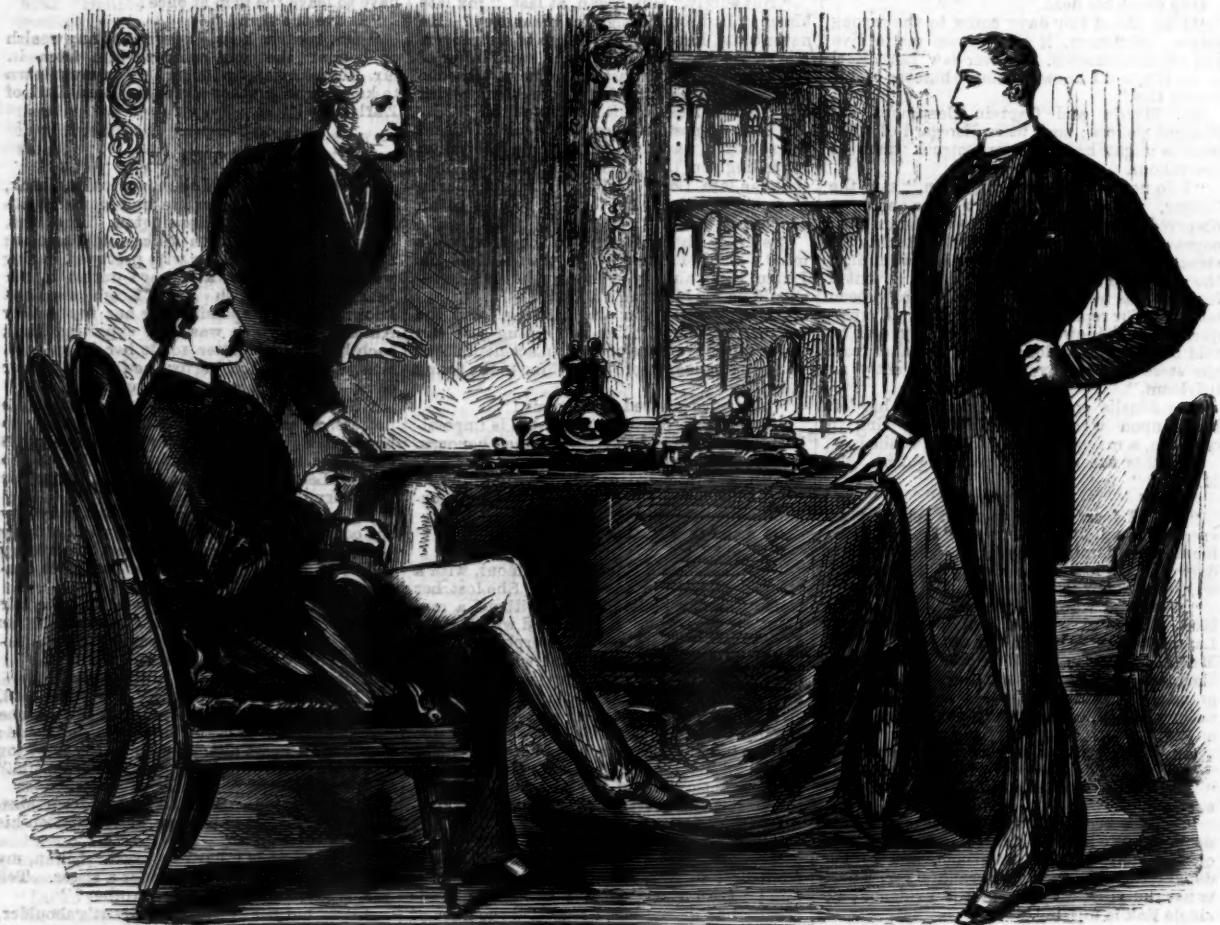
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[AN UNEXPECTED REVELATION FOR GUY AINSLIS.]

NAMELESS.

CHAPTER XV.

There was no further opportunity for Guy Ainslie and Lillian to exchange confidences, and the girl herself desired none. He knew now that her sin had not been what he thought it, and yet he refused her friendship. Surely if he were so hard and stern it was happier for her to see little of him!

But she loved him still. There are some hearts so true and loyal that with them to love once is to love for ever. The intense gratitude born of his kindness that cold, dismal, autumn day when they first met, strengthened by his protecting care at Paddington railway station, had ripened into an affection which not even his cruel reproaches in the schoolroom at Castle Dacres, his cold refusal in Mrs. Grant's drawing-room ever to be her friend, could destroy.

Guy Ainslie went home from that interview at Mrs. Grant's as one that walked on air; the cruel anxiety which had haunted him all

these months was at an end. Lillian was found, and his darling was worthy of his love, her only sin was that from being a rich man's idolized child she had become at his death a nameless wanderer.

A great joy filled his heart as he thought of the happiness he could bring to her. Guy was not conceited, but he had read the language of Lillian's shy, violet eyes, and he believed that his greatest wish would be granted, and Lillian would be his wife.

His wife! The strong man almost trembled at the thought of what his home might be with that fair face to shine upon him always, with Lillian at his side for weal or woe until death parted them.

"Kate always liked her," he murmured to himself, thinking of his sister. "I am glad to think she will welcome my darling gladly."

He reached Leckenhamp soon after eight, and the little maid received him with the message, "Some gentlemen were waiting to see him on business. She had shown them into the dining-room."

"On business?" her master repeated slowly

"There must be some mistake; no one comes to see me here on business."

"They said it was very important, sir. They had been to the office, and found you had left. They have been waiting here two hours. Mistress sent them in some tea."

Surprised, half-annoyed, Guy Ainslie laid aside his hat and greatcoat, and turned towards the dining-room. Not a suspicion had he as to the errand of his visitors; his acquaintances in Leckenhamp were very few—the home was more his sister's than his. Business of all kinds was reserved for the office. That two gentlemen should waste two hours of their time in waiting for him was passing strange!

A strikingly handsome man he looked as he went in to greet his unexpected guests, one who had the imprint of nobility stamped on every feature.

Two gentlemen arose at his approach; one was an elderly man; the other a few years his junior, had a tall, erect bearing, and soldierly air. He offered his hand in cordial fashion.

"Guy Ainslie, I believe?"

"Yes," returned the person thus addressed,

that is my name; but you have the advantage of me, sir. I do not think I have ever seen you."

"No. I am Captain Cecil Beaumont, and this my friend Mr. Martin, solicitor, of the Inner Temple, and legal adviser to the late Lord Earl."

Guy Ainslie bowed. He really did not see how these facts concerned him.

"You are probably aware that Lord Earl has been dead more than a year, and that the utmost efforts have been made to find his heir."

Guy shook his head.

"I am afraid you have come to the wrong person, gentlemen, if you expect me to give you any information. I never saw Lord Earl in my life, and I know nothing whatever of his family ties."

Mr. Martin and Captain Beaumont exchanged glances; such utter disregard of what fortune might have in store struck them as marvellous.

"I do not think we are mistaken," said the lawyer, firmly. "A short time ago we observed in a jeweller's window a signet ring, engraved with the motto of the Earls. It struck my attention at once, and I went into the shop to try and purchase the ring, but I found it was not for sale; it had merely been left there for repairs and alteration. I cross-questioned the jeweller pretty closely, and he told me the ring belonged to you; and from the store you set by it, it was evidently an heirloom."

Guy Ainslie smiled. He held up his left hand, upon whose little finger the ring in question, a magnificent diamond, flashed.

"Is this the object of your inquiries, Mr. Martin?"

"Yes."

"Then I fear what I have to tell you respecting it will disappoint you. It is an heirloom in our family. My father willed it to his dying day; he inherited it from his mother, whose maiden name was Campbell."

"Aye! and who was the only child of the Hon. Marguerite Earl and her husband, Laurence Campbell. Your great grandmother. Mr. Ainslie was the daughter of the late Lord Earl, and the sister of another. It was this grandson who died last year, childless and without a will, consequently you are his heir-at-law."

Guy Ainslie stood at his companion.

"It is impossible! he returned, firmly. "Why, I did not even know we were connected!"

"It has been our care to prove the connection. We have searched for the certificate of Marguerite Earl's marriage, and of her daughter's union with your grandfather. There is not the slightest flaw in the evidence; no single link is missing."

"But," persisted Guy, "there was the brother of my ancestors, Marguerite Earl; surely he left descendants?"

"He left only one son, the father of the late Lord Earl. Really, Mr. Ainslie, it is very difficult to convince you of your own good fortune!"

"I confess I do not understand it."

"Well, you must have to do so soon, I can assure you. Your position will be a splendid one. The late Lord Earl never lived up to his income; there must be about sixty thousand pounds in funded property. Barlomere itself, one of the liveliest estates in Lancashire, and a revenue of many thousands a year, and it is all yours. There's not a creature on earth to dispute your right to it. There will be some legal rights to go through, of course, and a pretty considerable sum to pay away in legacy duty; but before the new year is many days old you will be installed in your rights as Lord Earl of Barlomere; and I hope ere long we may congratulate you upon finding a charming countess to share your title and honours."

Captain Beaumont held out his hand.

"You will let me congratulate you now," he said, pleasantly. "I am the cousin of the late

Lady Earl, and I have taken a great interest in tracing the heir to her husband's property. I am a lonely man, without many family ties, but such as it is, Lord Earl, I am proud to offer you my friendship."

Guy sat as one lost in a dream; the news was so strange, so wonderful and unexpected. Could it really be that he was an English peer of vast wealth? that he would be able to place a coronet on Lillian's fair, white brow?

The two men who watched him thought they had never seen anyone bear the news of sudden prosperity with such calmness.

"But surely," Guy began, at last, "my late kinsman had some design for his money? He never could have meant it to go to a stranger. His riches may be mine, by the strict letter of the law, but there must have been someone near and dear to him for whom he intended a portion, at least, of his great wealth?"

"Your suggestion does you honour!" said the solicitor, warmly. "I have no hesitation in telling you that there was such an one; that the late Lord Earl had intended Earle himself, and all his fortune, to pass to an adopted daughter."

A strange thought came to the new peer's mind. Could it possibly be that Lillian—his Lillian, so he already called her in his heart—should be his kinsman's heiress?

"I know what you are thinking," said the lawyer, warmly. "You are saying you can never take advantage of such an accident; that you will at once restore everything to the young lady!"

"You have guessed rightly, sir!"

"It is a generous thought, but it is impossible! Resteasy, Lord Earl, in your new honours. She for whom your beautiful home, your vast wealth, was intended, can never need either!"

"You mean she has married, and her husband's riches surpass even mine?"

"I mean that she is dead!"

"Dead!"

"Even so," said Captain Beaumont, with a strange sadness in his voice. "She lost her father—as she believed him—without a moment's preparation. She learned within three days that she was a nameless orphan, penniless and homeless. The man who had professed to love her devotedly; and the sweetest friend by such a sea of trouble, the poor girl yielded to temptation, and took the life she had ceased to value."

Deep indignation sounded in his voice. The new Lord Earl replied with a grave sadness, for he was thinking of his own love, and how much her fate resembled that of his kinsman's darling.

"Poor child!"

"No one could bluster. I knew his fault from first to last, condoned, however, his villainy! Lord Earl, when I saw to what his cruelty had driven him, I regretted the days of

longing were over."

"And he got off scot-free?"

"Of course, no one could touch him; but there is an unspoken law of public feeling, and that condemned him pretty strongly. You need not fear his society being forced upon you, my lord; he was obliged to leave the neighbourhood within a very short time of his victim's death!"

"And now," proposed the Captain, "we will say good-night! We have intruded on you an unconsciousable time, and I am quite sure your good sister is impatient for us to be gone that she may learn what we have detained you so long discussing."

"Will you not tell her yourselves?" said Guy, warmly. "Kate and I have been so much to each other that I think she will thank you better for your tidings than I have been able to do. My father died when I was a child, and left nothing but debts behind him. Whatever I am, whatever I may be, I owe it all under Heaven to my sister, and I should like her to hear of my prosperity first from you."

He threw the door open and led the way to the drawing-room. Miss Ainslie was there alone, a strange anxiety written on her face.

She started up with an eager question as her brother entered.

"Oh, Guy! is there anything the matter?"

"Nothing in the world, my dear Miss Ainslie," said Mr. Martin, kindly. "We have brought your brother a piece of news which I suspect will please you even more than it did him."

Kate's ideas took a brilliant plunge.

"Oh, Guy! have they made you a partner?"

"No, Miss Ainslie, you are quite mistaken," said Captain Beaumont, smiling. "In fact, we have persuaded your brother that he will have to leave the firm at once!"

"Leave the firm!"

"Yes, because he will never need any wealth or honour that can come to him from it. Mr. Ainslie exists no longer! You must learn to know your brother afresh as Lord Earl of Barlomere!"

CHAPTER XVI.

It often seemed to Lillian, on looking back, that no time in all her life had seemed quite so long as her visit at Kensington. True, Mrs. Grant treated her with all her old kindness; though she did so with pretty endearing ways, but there was a strange unrest in her heart. Whilst with Lady Leigh she had known it was impossible for her to see Guy Ainslie. Now she was never expecting him; each kind, each better made her heart beat. She was always looking for the face that never came—the face dear to her on earth.

"Guy Ainslie! how well!" said her gentle hostess, when some allusion had been made to his brief, flying visit. "I think he has quite got over his disappointment, and that the wretched Lally Dower induced him by her treachery to leave it."

Lillian remained motionless; she felt somehow she could trust Guy as an ordinary person. But Captain Beaumont reminded Mary Grant of the little woman she had once known.

"Dame!" she said, gently striking the fair face on her cheek; "the old absence done its work; haven't you learned yet that Guy Ainslie 'only a man like other men'?"

Lillian shuddered.

"Don't speak of it, please," she whispered, "I know more about it; and yet I have done nothing wrong. It is only he was so kind to me; and now I cannot change. I wish I could."

"And Archie?"

Lillian started. She had fancied from Mrs. Grant's silence her brother had forgotten his young infatuation.

"He, too, finds it hard to forget. Lillian, my darling, I should like you for a sister. Tell me, is there no longer for my brother?"

Lillian hid her face in Mrs. Grant's shoulder, and whispered "No!"

"If you would only bring yourself to think of it," answered her friend, "I believe you would be very happy with Archie; he would give you just the quiet, sensible home you need."

"But I do not love him—I never shall."

"Dear, believe me, in time you will forget Guy Ainslie. No love lives on quite without hope; in time Guy's image will be forgotten."

"I think not."

"You are wasting your love upon a man who will never return it: Guy put aside all thought of love or marriage long ago when Vivian Ormond deceived him. I think myself, sometimes, that unless Sir John died and leaves his old love free he will never have a wife."

Lillian had thought so, too.

"And he would not make you happy, dear," went on her mentor, firmly. "Guy has his way to make in the world; he is very ambitious. If a time came when his wife's past history were discussed—if it grew noised abroad that she was nameless, that she owed all to him—I do not think his pride would ever survive it. Even if Guy loved you, Lillian, he is the last person in the world you ought to marry."

"He does not love me, he never will; we are only discussing impracticability."

"Then, dear, if you say frankly it is an impossibility, tell me, do you mean to waste your whole life in thinking of it?"

"I don't understand," said Lillian, a little stiffly, "why should marriage be the end and aim of a girl's life?"

"Because it is her natural vocation."

"Then I do not want my vocation. I am very happy as I am."

Yes, Lady Leigh loves you as a daughter, but think, dear, she is getting old, she cannot live many years longer. You will then be stranded once more on life's wide ocean, my dear. Believe me, you are too pretty, too gentle to be tossed about the world; what you need is a home, and someone to love you and care for you."

She pressed her lips to the girl's forehead, and went out without another word wisely thinking her little lecture would make more impression if Lillian were left to muse over it alone.

The girl sat on by the bright wood fire which had all its Christmas brilliance. The holly and the mistletoe still decked the walls, but there was little of Christmas joy or happiness at Lillian's heart. She was full of a strange, keen pain. Was it just as Mrs. Grant had said? Guy really loved her must she send him away—must she with her own hand dash the cup of happiness from her lips?

"Why should Archibald Darby be thought a safe and suitable match for her? Why? Because he was rich and of an assured position did his own sister admit, ay, and urge that the shadow on her life would matter nothing to him, and yet in the same voice tell her that same shadow, if she married her life's love, would blight their happiness and prosperity?

Lillian thought she understood. Mr. Darby owed nothing to his own exertions; he was not the architect of his own fortunes, and he was of a nature which cares little for the frowns of others. Guy, on the contrary, had his way to make, and he was proud, ay, intensely proud, sensitively alive to any breath of dishonour. She who worshipped him knew his character well; she mused over it until her decision was taken. Even if her heart's wish were granted her she would push it from her; she would never let injury come to Guy Ainslie through love of her. She would never live to see a day when, bound to her by his own solemn word, he should yet regret the ties that united him. No; anything in the whole world was better than that!

So she sat on in the December firelight, half dreaming of the future which eighteen months ago had looked so fair, and was now so blank and drear; and so, alone and silent, the man who loved her better ten thousand times than his own life found her.

"Lillian!"

She looked up and met his eyes—the eyes she had seen so often in her dreams, bending over her with a strange protecting fondness. She spoke no word; it seemed to her what she had called an impossibility had actually come to pass. Her hero had learned to love her; her King Cupid was ready to stoop to his beggar maid.

"My darling!" the man's voice was strong and clear; there was no mistaking the truthful ring in its every syllable. "My darling, I have come to tell you why I refused your friendship the other night. Lillian, we never can be friends; to me you must be all or nothing. Dearest, I want you to put your hand in mine, and promise to give yourself to me. I want you at my side, Lillian, in joy or sorrow, sickness or health. I want to have the right to protect you from every trial, every danger. Darling, lift your beautiful eyes to my face and tell me it is not all in vain; that you will not send me away disappointed and heartbroken, but will be my own beloved wife?"

And then in the firelight, looking into her eyes as though he could read his sentence written there, Guy waited for her answer. And it was long in coming. She loved him so, she trusted him with all her heart; she was weary, oh! so weary, of her lonely life. She longed,

with such an unutterable longing, to throw herself into his arms and claim them as her sure refuge from all sorrow; but Mrs. Grant's warning rang in her ears. She knew the man she loved was loyal and true, but she knew also that he was proud and sensitive; that he had had a long uphill fight with fortune. Ought she, could she add to his burdens? Ought she, nameless and obscure, to take advantage of his generosity, and become a clog to his future?

She loved him, but there are some few women

in the world so true, so noble, that they can

conquer over love itself rather than injure

their heart's dearest. Lillian was of these few.

Raising her violet eyes to Guy Ainslie's face,

she said simply,

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I shall respect and honour you while life re-

mains, but I can never marry you."

"Why?"

His eyes were bent upon her face, she

shrank beneath their scrutiny.

"Do not ask me!"

"I must ask you. I love you, Lillian, as I think few women are loved. I must know why you reject me. I claim an explanation as my right!"

She was silent; the words she longed to speak must not be uttered, and no others came to her lips.

"Lillian," said the strong man, tenderly, "my little Lillian, can't you love me, my darling? I may have seemed hard and stern, but to you I will be all gentleness. Darling, trust yourself to me!"

"I cannot," she cried, bitterly, "I cannot. Oh! do not ask me why."

"I do ask you."

Her tears were falling fast. Her grief moved Guy Ainslie's very heart, but he persisted in his question; he meant to have his answer.

"You never seemed to dislike me," he said, gently; "from the moment of our first meeting you treated me as a friend."

"But you will not give me your friendship," she said, quietly; "you refuse it me!"

"Because I want something more. Lillian, did you feel nothing more than friendship for me that last day at Castle Dacres, when you put your hand upon my shoulder and begged me not to judge you harshly?"

"You shook off my hand," she replied wistfully.

"Ay, because I was under a cruel mistake. I tell you I know the truth now. I loved you wildly even then; to love I now add honour. I ask you, as the highest blessing Heaven can give, to be my wife."

"And I thank you, but refuse."

"Why?"

"Am I bound to give a reason?"

"Yes."

"But if I have none?"

"You must have, you are not a coquette! It can give you no pleasure to trifling with a man's holiest feelings. Lillian, do you refuse me because they have told you the secret of my life? because, three years ago, I was engaged to my cousin, Vivian Ormond, she whom you knew as Lady Dacres? My darling, this need not make you hesitate. If my love for her were not dead and gone, do you think I would injure you by asking you to marry me?"

"It is not that," she murmured.

"Have I a rival?"

"No!"

"You want me to believe that, being heart whole and fancy free, you yet refuse my love?"

She was silent.

"Lillian," and his arms released her from their clasp, while his eyes again sought hers. "As Heaven is above us I believe you love me! Sweet, I believe your heart is mine, though you may not know it. If you can look into my face and say you can never care for me, I promise you that you shall never more be troubled by the mention of my love."

She raised her head proud and erect; she tried to do his bidding, but words failed her. The falsehood would not come—Guy Ainslie strained her to his heart.

"Ah, little girl," he murmured, reproachfully, "you could not be untrue. I knew you would not look into my face and tell me a lie."

"I love you!" she whispered. "I think I have loved you ever since we first met."

"And yet you made me miserable."

"How?"

"By sending me away!"

"I cannot help it," she moaned; "it is not my fault. Oh, Mr. Ainslie, indeed it is not."

"Call me by my name," he cried, passionately. "Never let me be anything but Guy from your lips, Lillian."

"Guy," she said simply, repeating the name in mute obedience to his will. "Guy, you know I can never be aught to you, never while I live."

"And why?"

The girl nerv'd herself for the effort.

"Because your wife must be above suspicion, because her past must be open as a book, and in mine there is a secret."

"Tell it to me!"

"How can I! I do not even know it myself. Guy, I have not even a name of my own; my parents may have been felons! How can I take the shadow of disgrace into your family? How can I bring such a burden upon you?"

Guy Ainslie fairly laughed in his glad relief.

"Is that all, you foolish child?" he said, lightly. "What does that matter! Do you think I could love you any better if you had half a dozen families claiming you as a descendant? Really, Lillian, I am very angry with you!"

"It matters a great deal, Guy!"

"I say it matters nothing!"

"You say so now! You love me, and you are so unselfish you would wreak your future for my sake. But do you think I could accept the sacrifice which would blight your prospects?"

He knew that the news of his honours had not reached her, that she was replying to him as simple Guy Ainslie, who worked hard for his living, and he never told her that he was Lord Earl. He felt his riches and title would only be so many obstacles to his success.

"I think if you love me you ought to marry me!" he said, earnestly. "Think of what my life will be without you!"

"You will forget me in time!"

"I am not good at forgetting."

A long, long silence, broken only by the ticking of the gold ormolu clock on the mantelpiece. Lillian shivered even in the firelight. Guy's heart ached as he noted how frail and delicate she looked. What would his riches and honours avail him if she persisted in her refusal to share them?

"Lillian!" he said, hotly; "don't let your absurd pride wreck both our lives! Darling, if you love me, nothing in the world should divide us!"

"But in the future!"

"Let the future be my care! Don't you think I should go on loving you, you poor foolish little thing?"

"You might see all you had sacrificed. Your friends might convince you of how you had spoilt your life. Guy, if we were married, and I saw that you regretted it, I think I should kill myself!"

"You never would see it, Lillian! What am I to say to you? How am I to convince you?"

She nestled the least bit closer to him, and her golden head rested on his shoulder. He pressed passionate kisses upon her lips, and she suffered him, if this was the last time they two were to stand together as lovers. If his own welfare demanded that she should give him up surely—ah! surely, she might carry the memory of his caresses—the thought of this one moment of bliss—with her out into the dreary darkness of her lonely future.

"You cannot send me away!" he cried, passionately. "Lillian, you must conquer your pride, and be merciful to us both!"

She was silent; her strength to resist his will seemed ebbing fast away.

"Listen!" he told her gravely. "I will not take your answer now! I will not listen

to your refusal. I will leave you for a month. I have to go out of London on important business. I will come to you on my return. Think well over it, my darling; ask anyone in the whole world, and they will tell you the same thing, that for a vain chimera you ought not to blight our lives! I shall tell my sister of your fears; she loved you from the very first, dear! You know what she is—how generous, brave, and true. If she tells you you will be right to marry me, will you try to overcome your absurd scruples?"

"She will not say so!"

"I think she will. If you send me away, when I return for my answer, do you know what I shall do, Lillian?"

"No!"

"I shall devote my whole life—my whole fortune—to solving the mystery of your birth. I shall make you tell me every fact you know; every trifle that can throw a ray of light upon the puzzle, and then I shall give my every effort, my whole strength, to solving the question. You will be imposing a cruel task upon me, Lillian; but if you impose it, I suppose it must be done."

"You are angry with me, Guy!" and her hand lingered caressingly upon his face.

"I think I would rather you were less noble," he said, fondly. "Other men would reverence your scruples. I know the unselfishness which prompts them; but oh! my darling, tell me, how am I to bear them if they rob me of my wife?"

A few tender words of farewell and they parted.

Guy felt as if he could not endure Mrs. Grant's kindly, commonplaces just then. He held Lillian's hand in his as he told her that, if he was alive, he should return that day month for her decision.

"But I shall not be here!"

"Where then?"

"At Lady Leigh's," and she explained to him the position she filled at Eaton-square.

"Well, I shall come there then. I am glad you are happy with the Countess; but, Lillian, I would prefer you were no one's companion but mine. When do you return?"

"To-morrow. Lady Leigh has spared me all this time because her son came home to spend Christmas with her."

"What, the handsome widower! I will not be jealous of him, Lillian. He is well-nigh old enough to be your father, and they say his heart was buried in his wife's grave."

"I have never seen him."

"Adieu, my best and dearest. Remember, I do not accept your decision at final. I shall come for my real answer in a month."

When he had gone—when the last echo of his footsteps died away—Lillian felt relieved that her stay in Kensington was so nearly over.

After all, kind as Mrs. Grant was, there were a few trying things in visiting the sister of the man she had rejected. Life at Eaton-square might be more monotonous, but, at least, it was more peaceful.

Guy's second visit she resolutely put out of her head. Lillian would not even think of it, and all that devolved on it. She went back to Lady Leigh with an intense desire not to let her mind recur to all the excitement of the day before.

The Countess received her fondly.

"My dear, I have missed you so—I could not do without you any longer! Gerald is here, but he could not quite make up to me for the loss of my little girl!"

It was pleasant to be received so warmly—it was sweet to feel that, nameless and obscure as she was, she had a place in that warm, womanly heart.

Lillian replied gratefully. She took up her old place in Lady Leigh's boudoir, and tried hard to imagine that the events of the last few days were only an idle dream.

She wondered a little when she should see the Earl. She little knew that his mother dreaded the meeting.

She had sent Lillian away for no other reason

than to spare her son's feelings on seeing the girl's close resemblance to his wife. Lady Leigh had fancied a very few days at home would suffice her son, but he still lingered, and she missed her little favourite, openly lamenting her absence, until Gerald himself said, carelessly, —

"You had better send for her back. If you are afraid of my being bothered by her you need not trouble. I can breakfast in the library. I don't suppose I shall even know Miss Green is in the house."

And three whole days passed before he ever caught sight of his mother's companion, and then it came about in this wise. He was returning from a dinner-party at an hour when he knew his mother would be in bed, and he turned into the dining-room, expecting to find a fire and lights. To his discontent cold and darkness greeted him.

"There is a fire in my lady's boudoir, my lord," said the butler, after patiently enduring his master's reproaches; "shall I have the gas lighted there?"

Lord Leigh refused.

"I know the way," he said, surlily. "Another time, remember, this room is to be kept in readiness for me!"

It was but little after ten. He had left the party early, and did not mean to retire to rest for another hour. He turned the door of the boudoir and entered, well pleased to see the welcome glow of firelight and the soft rays of the moderator lamp. Then it seemed to him that the last twenty years had rolled away and his wife stood before him, young and beautiful as when he parted from her.

He stood as one spellbound. It was his wife!—his Rosamond!—the girl he had loved [and married more than twenty years before! But she looked no older than when he left her! She was dressed in the fashion of the day.

"Rosamond!" he gasped, as one in a strange nightmare. "What does it mean? My wife—my darling! Have you come back to me from the grave?"

(To be continued.)

If you desire to enjoy life, avoid unpunctual people. They impede business and poison pleasure. Make it your rule not only to be punctual but a little beforehand.

Food for Thought.—Among the more reflective of those Londoners who have just returned from rural parts, the thought must have often occurred that British philanthropy would do well to concern itself with the growing tendency of our population to concentrate in towns. The contrast between the strength, vigour, and abounding health of country folks, and the attenuated forms of their urban brethren, is not greater than that between the wholesome surroundings of the former and the vitiated environments of the latter. The labourer's cottage may not be much to boast of as a human dwelling, but at all events it is immeasurably superior to the foul dens which the working classes in towns too often have to make their account with. In the matter of sustenance, too, the rural would appear, judging from his bodily condition, to fare much better than his class-mate in cities. Wages may be somewhat lower in the country, but they go a great deal further, and the agricultural labourer has many ways of eking out a living which the townsmen cannot resort to. Were the balance of advantages and disadvantages fairly struck, and put plainly before our country cousins, it might possibly operate to some extent in limiting the migration to London which fills our working-class quarters with unemployed labour. When once a young countryman makes the plunge, a sense of shame prevents him from returning to his village, and so he goes on from bad to worse, until he loses the physical strength and health which used to insure him a comfortable living all the year round.

HIDDEN FROM ALL EYES.

CHAPTER XLIX.—(continued.)

GODFREY drew Nella's hand through his arm, and led her by a door at the end of the conservatory to a small room on the other side of the hall which had once been the children's study. It was dimly lighted, and looked as if it were but little used.

"I've only brought you here," he said, in answer to her look of surprise, "to show you what Dulcie Arkwright was like before Maltravers spoilt her life."

He pointed as he spoke to an oil-painting over the mantel-piece, which had once adorned the walls of Burlington House.

It represented Dulcie as a lovely girl of sixteen, with a look of serene happiness in her fawn-like eyes, of which they had long been robbed.

"She is more beautiful now!" and Nella turned away.

"Do you think so? I don't. Wait here," he said, hurriedly, "whilst I go and see if my aunt is ready."

He was gone before she could remonstrate, and she sat down on the sofa, obliged to wait for him, against her will.

Not a sound reached her in that out-of-the-way little room, not a note of the music, or even the distant murmur of laughter. Time, under such circumstances, seems long, in proportion to our impatience, and she had just made up her mind to leave her lonely retreat, and venture back, within reach of somebody else's society, when Somerville returned with her fur cloak and soft white shawl upon his arm.

"I could not trouble you to go upstairs, so went and fetched them. I spotted them at once," he said, with a smile, as he wrapped them carefully around her, "but the female in charge was very unwilling to give them up."

"Is Lady Somerville there?" she asked, as he hurried her along the hall.

"She was a moment ago, but I don't see her now," looking about him in well simulated anxiety. "Whose carriage is that?" turning to a footman.

"Lady Somerville's, sir!"

"That's all right! Come along, quick!" and he led her down the steps.

"But this is the brougham! They can't have gone without me!" standing stock still.

"But they have! Uncle was in a towering rage at being kept waiting. Get in!"

"But there is some mistake," hesitating, "you had the white horse—Psyche. I remember it quite well! This is somebody else's carriage!"

"Nonsense. Don't you recognize Pearl?" in a hoarse whisper. "Get in, for Heaven's sake. She has not been in harness for a long while, and they can scarcely hold her head."

Pearl! Yes she would have known the beautiful mare anywhere, and though wondering how it could ever have changed places with Psyche, put her foot on the step. "I'm not going alone with you," she said, hesitating once more.

Somerville, driven mad by every small delay, muttered an oath. "Of course not," he said as calmly as he could. "The others will be here directly, but that is no reason why you should catch your death of cold. We can get in, and wait till they come."

"Does Cyril know?"

"I told him myself. Be quick!" Satisfied at last, she was on the point of jumping into the carriage, when a hand was laid on her shoulder. "Stop!"

It was Cyril's voice, and she drew back in astonishment.

"Lady Somerville has gone without me," she said, supposing that he did not understand.

"Then you must come with us"—his face white with suppressed passion, whilst Godfrey stood still, as it struck by sudden paralysis.

"Of course, and this is the brougham!"

"Is that Psyche?" sternly, as if he thought she was trying to deceive him. He made a sign at the same time to the coachman to move on, and beckoned to George to take his place.

"No, but it's Pearl—"

"Yes, and there couldn't be a better horse than Pearl," broke in Godfrey, summoning his scattered wits to the rescue. "Psyche kicks. Nella, don't listen to him, or you'll come to grief on the way home."

"My cousin comes with me. Get in," he said briefly; and Nella, bewildered and amazed, did as she was bid. Cyril immediately took his place by her side, as if it were his by right. Mr. Mallon sat on the opposite seat, his thoughts still too full of his last good-bye to Dulcie, to take in the full significance of the crisis.

Godfrey Somerville stood on the steps, in silent impotent wrath, knowing that his last hope was gone. Vera shut the door with a bang, and put his head out of the window. "You know best for what motive you had a third carriage to-night," he said, in a low, distinct whisper. "I hope you will find it useful. Go where I told you," he called out to his groom.

"Curse you!" cried Godfrey, savagely, as he clenched his fist; but his curses had no power to harm the man who had foiled him, or to bring back the girl he had lost!

CHAPTER L.

VICTOR had taken so long over his farewell to Dulcie, neither knowing if it would prove to be the last meeting they would have on earth, that George had to drive at a rapid pace in order to get to Nun's Tower at the appointed time.

Vere sat by the side of his cousin, in angry silence. Her presence was at once an annoyance and perplexity to him. He could not tell how long they might be delayed, or what measures they would have to take; whether Robin would fall into their hands an easy captive, or whether they would have to pursue her through the rest of the wintry night. Meanwhile what could be done with this girl, who had been forced to come with them against her will? If they kept her out all night, Lady Somerville would never forgive them; and yet they could not send her home, because they might be sorely in need of the carriage. Somerville would be certain to follow them at once; so that if they left her outside, the interrupted elopement would be resumed with the greatest ease. He looked at Mr. Mallon for some suggestion, but Victor was lost in a dream, and had evidently forgotten that Eleanor Maynard was sitting just opposite to him.

To have a woman thrust upon you when you were engaged in a difficult and dangerous expedition was embarrassing to the last degree, and it was with no kindly eye that Vere looked upon the delicate profile dimly seen by the light of the carriage lamp. Something must be settled, so at last he spoke, stiffly, as if a visible barrier had risen up between them.

"We have to stop at Nun's Tower on a matter of business on the way home, and I am afraid I must ask you to wait outside."

"Can't I come with you?" weakly, as if her strength had been tried to the uttermost.

"Impossible! Somerville is sure to come after us, and I want to know how we stand. Just tell me simply whether you meant to run away with him to-night, or whether he was carrying you off without your knowledge?"

"I don't know what he meant to do. I think he was half mad; but I had just said good-bye to him, as I thought for ever—"

"Good-bye! Then you knew what was going to happen?" interrupting her in his great astonishment.

"Better perhaps than you did. I told you wait."

"Yes, and if I had waited another moment the scoundrel would have carried you off!"

She shivered, understanding for the first time the horrible danger she had run, and

remembering certain hints that Somerville had thrown out as to his future life in Paris, which had puzzled her much at the time.

"If I leave you outside now, you won't go with him? Promise me that," he said, earnestly.

"Go with him!" she exclaimed in horror; "I would rather lay me down in the road for Psyche to run over me. You don't know how dearly glad I am to think I shall never see his face again."

"Women are incomprehensible creatures," muttered Vere, underneath his moustaches.

"Look! the dawn is breaking," said Nella, dreamily; "and how often I have wondered what this day would bring forth!"

Cyril followed the direction of her eyes, then sprung to his feet, knocking the crown of his head against the roof of the carriage; the glass rattled down, and he thrust his face out of the window, shouting,

"Drive for your life!"

Victor started forward, his eyes fixed in horror at the crimson light in the sky.

"Good heavens! we shall be too late!"

"We may be in time. In fact, this may be the best thing for us," said Vere, recovering his calmness, as usual with him in a great emergency.

Nella sat with clasped hands, and a prayer on her lips. She thought of the girl with the wild, wistful eyes. If only she might be saved, to know that Victor had come at last!

The gates were open, and the carriage dashed up the narrow drive, the tops of the gloomy ilexes lit up by a lurid glare. None of the three spoke; so Victor, knowing as he did that the whole future of his existence depended on the issue of the next few minutes, that avenue was an endless length. His heart seemed to stand still, his power of speech was gone; he could only sit with his head out of the window, staring at the growing light.

He opened the door before the carriage stopped, and rushed up to the house, followed by Vere. A woman was standing on the steps wringing her hands. It was Sarah Prendergast, who had lost her head completely.

Maltravers clutched her by the shoulder.

"Where is she?" he asked, hoarsely; and she, forgetting her long habit of concealment, pointed to the doorway, through which volumes of smoke were pouring, and cried, desparingly,

"In there!"

"Whereabouts?" his eager face close to hers.

"At the very top, most likely. The louder I called the further she went, then a bit of the staircase fell, and I couldn't get to her."

Without waiting for more details, Maltravers threw himself into the midst of the smoke, shouting "Robin! Robin!" as loudly as he could in the choking atmosphere.

There was no answer but the roar and the sputter of the flames overhead, which seemed like the tongues of hungry animals seeking to devour.

He knew the house better than Vere, so groped his way to the staircase without much difficulty.

The fire had made no progress downward, as the lower part of the Tower was composed of stone, but the rooms on the ground floor—there being no draught to carry it off—were filled with smoke.

Blinded and half choked Maltravers climbed up the staircase, and reached the spot where it had fallen in. He looked down into the gap, and thought it was impassable. He must evidently go round by some other way; but time was precious, and where could he find it? Then he put his hands to his mouth, and called "Robin! Robin!" with the whole strength of his lungs.

The shout rose high above every other sound, and echoed far and wide down the long passages of the desolate building. He bent his head and listened; a girl's voice answered, glad as a bird's in spring.

"I am here; I'm coming!"

The voice which was to bring him redemption from all his sorrows! As its tones reached his ears the blood rushed to his head. Feeling that he must reach it, even if death were on the way, he made a desperate leap, and catching the end of a broken beam, swung himself up by his hands to a higher level. The step gave way as he touched it, but he scrambled on to the next, and so, by use of hands and knees, reached firm ground at last. His hair was in flames, he tore off wig and whiskers; his coat was burning, he threw it down; and so, robbed of every disfiguring disguise, stood still and waited in the flame-lit passage, his eager ears listening for any token of Robin's presence.

Presently, through the dull, grey smoke, he saw the flutter of a white skirt, and a small hand that beckoned. He darted after them in hottest haste; but some curious idea had floated into the girl's disordered brain that they never could meet amongst smoke and flame, but only outside in the cold, fresh air, with the stars above their heads. Fast she flew with eager feet, her long hair fluttering with the haste she made, as she mounted a spiral staircase. At the top was a door, which was always kept locked, till the keys were stolen, and left to rust amongst the nettles. She turned the handle with shaking fingers, stooped her head to listen; then, with a smile on her parted lips, sped along a dreary length of gallery, happy in the knowledge that the feet she loved were following. Victor was following, though conscious that every step he took was taking him further and further from any hope of rescue.

Like a bewildering will-o'-the-wisp she was luring him on to certain destruction, and yet he could not stop, but must strain every effort to reach her. To save the girl who once had loved him—to win the girl whom now he loved with the whole strength of his heart—to clear the name which had been handed down to him by a long line of stainless forefathers! With such motives to spur him on, no wonder that he struggled on with a determination that never faltered, even though he knew that death was beckoning with a girl's delicate fingers.

Through a broken skylight Robin climbed with the agility of a squirrel, and stood alone upon the roof, the cold night air blowing on her soft white cheeks, her dark eyes glowing with triumph.

She waved her arms above her head with a shout of joy. Nella heard it down below, and shuddered.

"He is here," whispered Robin to the stars, "and Robin has found him."

A dark face begrimed with smoke appeared, framed in the sash of the window. She watched it, as it was quickly followed by the rest of Victor's body.

Then as he stood before her, straight and tall, as he had been in the past—with the same look in the kind dark eyes, which had won the heart from her breast, she began to tremble. A puzzled look crossed the wistfulness of her usual expression, as if the joy of finding him at last had brought back her wavering reason, and the clouds were half retreating from her misty brain.

"Victor," she said, whisperingly, as if afraid lest the sound of her voice should send the vision away.

"My poor little Robin!" His heart was overflowing with pity. To meet her thus, after the lapse of three long years! He thought of her as the bright young girl who had gloried in the free life of the Devonshire moors, and grieving over the rain and the sorrow, held out his arms.

With a little cry of unspeakable joy she sprang into them, and laid her tired head upon his breast. Found after long waiting! Come back to her, when hope had grown so weary! She could call him now, and he would answer. She might dream of him always, and wake to find him there!

He bent his head and kissed the low white forehead, and grieved to see how thin and pinched the young cheeks were so early in their

youth. Two tears were rolling down them, but there was a smile on the pretty lips, and the pain and the puzzle had melted away, and she looked like a lost bird who had found its nest.

Lost to all fear of death in the shelter of his arms she fell asleep, thinking, in her childish heart, that no harm could reach her there, whilst the eager watchers down below were counting the yards that still came between them and the leaping flames, wondering if, by a miracle, help might come before it was too late.

CHAPTER XLI.

VERE was busy with his band of detectives, getting buckets of water from the well in the stable-yard, but there was no hose to convey it to the upper storeys, and their trouble was wasted.

Nella crept out of the carriage, and stood timidly by the side of Prendergast, watching the destruction, and longing to render assistance. There was a sound of wheels, and presently Somerville rushed up and seized the woman by her arm.

"In there!" she said, in a dull, hopeless manner from which nothing could rouse her.

"And you are here!" he said fiercely. "Dead or alive, you ought to be with her, you d—d, disgusting coward." He gripped her hard, and tried to shake her in his passion, but she towered grimly above his head. "Any-one gone for the engines?"

She pointed to a fly at a little distance; the horse had been taken out of the shafts, and he concluded that the driver, mounted on its back, had been sent off to Newington.

"And how can I get to her?" measuring the burning front with his eye, and pulling off his coat.

"Now, don't, Master Godfrey," catching hold of his sleeve, and roused into animation by the remembrance of the 'danger' he would run. "You can't go"—choking down a sob—"it's death."

"Do you think I would let her die alone?"

"She ain't alone, there's a gentleman gone after her."

He started violently. "You fool to let him! Who was it?"

"I don't know, but there was two on 'em, and they are doing their best."

"Vere and Mallon!" he struck his hand to his forehead in dismay, then turned and stared at Nella, as if she had been a ghost. "You here!" he said slowly. "After all, you are going to see me die!" Then, without another word, he sprang up the steps, and was lost in clouds of smoke. Prendergast, that woman of stone, gave a cry as if her heart were breaking. Godfrey Somerville had been the idol of her life. For him she had slaved and done much evil, ready to deny her own soul, if need be, to win one word of kindness from him, or to bring him a fraction of good. She had hidden like a hunted criminal, and forsaken every pleasure in life, living in out-of-the-way corners, with a witness girl for her only companion. And for this he had paid her with harsh words that hurt her, and plenty of money for which she did not care! Still she loved him with the utter unselfish devotion of a faithful dog; and now that he was in danger she threw off her stupefaction, and racked her dull brain to see how best she could save him.

"Run!" she cried to some boys who were looking on. "Get me all the ladders you can find, and you shall be paid with gold."

The boys asked a few questions, and started off. Dick, who had been absent on an errand connected with the intended journey, ran up breathlessly. Prendergast carried him off to the stables, where they found two short ladders, which they spliced together by means of some old rope.

"Have you seen him?" Robin and all the rest were as nothing to her. Her only interest was for him.

"Yes," said Nella, pointing to a figure which

had just appeared on the slated roof outside Prendergast's own window.

"Stay there!" she cried, with a wild shriek of fear, as Godfrey, intent on reaching Robin at whatever cost, began to climb up the thick stems of the ivy. "The smoke 'ull choke you; the plant 'ull give way. Oh! Heaven, he's gone quite daft!"

Nella gathered her furs around her with a shiver. Victor was there, and Robin. Their figures showed in full relief whenever the smoke cleared away, against the blood-red sky. They could do nothing to help themselves, for escape was impossible. The flames were gradually mounting higher and higher; life or death only depended on the arrival of the fire-engines in time. Robin was lost to all consciousness of danger, but Victor was alive both to hope and fear; and as the minutes crawled on, and the very stones on which they were standing grew warm from the furnace raging below, he raised his face to the Heaven above him, in silent, tearless agony. Everything had come to him, but too late; and Dulcie, whom he could have claimed to-morrow, or on this day which was dawning, had been seen for the last time.

There was a shout from down below, followed by a loud resounding hiss, as the engines began to play on the burning building.

"Here, for Heaven's sake, be quick!" cried Vere, who had been doing all that man could do to help. "The roof can't last another minute!"

"Better not go so near, sir, the walls are not safe. This escape's not long enough."

Vere groaned. "It 'ull reach this buttress, the rest must be done with ladders. But whoever goes up on 'em 'ull take his life in his hand."

"I'll go first!" said Vere, promptly. "Let me have a rope to lower the lady down, if necessary."

Whilst he was waiting for it, in a fever of impatience, a small hand was laid on his arm, and Nella, unable to speak, looked up at him with imploring eyes.

"Child, you will catch cold," he said, kindly, as he drew the cloak over her frozen neck. "Good-bye, little Nell!" Then he snatched a rope from the fireman's hand, and in another moment was climbing upwards with all the haste he could. He reached the buttress, dragged the ladders after him, and mounted again.

"Oh! Heaven, have mercy!" sobbed Nella, as, shaking all over, she hid her face in her hands. It was impossible to watch him, as the flames leapt out to meet him as he passed, and serpent-like columns of smoke twisted themselves round his body. Even those who did not know him held their breath, astounded by the courage of this stranger.

A gasp—a sort of groan of pain close by her side—made Nella start. Prendergast took her by the hand, and dragged her a little to the left, where a shower of lighted splinters were falling fast.

"See there!" she said, pointing to a window which was very near the roof. "Do you see, the fire's all round it! It's like a trap—he can't escape. Pray for him—I've forgotten how!"

Nella clasped her hands in earnest supplication. "Oh, Heaven! bring them back in safety."

"Him!—bring him in safety, and let all the others go. I—I would ha' died for him—and yet I can't. He's there and I'm here, no good to him now." She clenched her hands in bitter, wild rebellion against Heaven's will. Godfrey Somerville had been her god, and all her words of prayer were dumb on her grim lips.

Meanwhile, the man, on whom her dog-like nature had fixed in fond fidelity, had nearly reached his goal. Utterly reckless of his own life, he recognised the fact that when he had joined Robin there would be nothing left for them to do but to die together. "Better so," he thought, sullenly, as, utterly exhausted by his long climb, he drew a deep breath, and collected his waning energies for a last effort.

"Better to take her with me than to leave her to the tender mercies of others."

Then he put out his hand, pushed open the skylight and tried to raise himself, and failed.

The floor was scorching his feet, the smoke was blinding. With a hopeless look at the aperture above him he thought he would rather die without any more trouble. But then he remembered his sister—she was probably all alone, for there was no one on earth who loved her as he did, and would give his life to save her. Certainly not Maltravers, who had long ago broken her heart; not Vere, who had only tried to find her out of spite to him.

Ah! the laugh would be against them now! He and Robin would be buried under the ruins of the Tower, and their secret would die with them. Nella would never tell—a lie always frightened her, and she wouldn't break her word to a dead man.

He leant his forehead against the sill with a groan. This day she was to have been his. Casting the thought aside, he summoned all his strength, and hoisted himself up with the greatest difficulty.

Having scrambled to an upright position he looked about him like one dazed. There was Robin a few paces from him, her dress no longer white, but red in the glare of the sky, and close beside her stood either Victor Maltravers or his ghost! Was he dreaming? Delusions came to those about to die. The smoke had got into his head. He rubbed his eyes and stared again.

"We have met at last!" said Victor, defiantly, as if a long life lay before him; "and with this poor child in my arms! I call you a liar—a coward—a would-be murderer!"

Somerville's breast heaved as his dark eyes grew fierce and eager.

"You broke her heart and you killed her reason! The death of a dog would have been too good for you! Give her to me—you have no right to touch her!"

"Hush!" said Victor, holding out his arm to shield her from his touch. "Don't wake her, she's asleep!"

"Asleep in a furnace like this! Robin, come to me!"

There was no answer. Alarmed he brushed away her hair, and looked at the small, white face. He was trembling when he raised his eyes to Victor's.

"She is dead!"

Maltravers started. Yes, it was true. The weary eyes had closed in their eternal sleep, and the tired Robin had gone to rest on the breast of the man she loved.

A sob rose in his throat. Unwittingly he had spoilt the beauty of her life, and yet he had come by a providential chance to receive her last sigh. Then Somerville tore her from his arms, and dragged her to the furthest verge of the narrow tower, where he leant against the livid parapet, hugging the cold, inanimate form to his desolate heart.

"Come!" cried Vere, hoarsely, as he suddenly appeared above the castellated edge. "One instant more, and we shall all be lost together!" He caught hold of Maltravers, and pushed him towards the ladder, then turned to Somerville. "Give me your sister and I'll go quick!"

Godfrey shook his head.

"Are you mad? Do you want to die?" looking at him in astonishment.

"Yes!" The word had scarcely escaped his lips when his wish seemed to be fulfilled. The whole of the left wall of the Tower fell down with a mighty crash, and the brother and sister disappeared together, whilst high above every other sound rose a woman's cry. Vere sprung to the ladder, as the rest of the building quivered, and, as if by a miracle, reached the ground a living man! The roof fell in and sent a fountain of lighted splinters to the sky, having lasted just long enough to save him; but where were the rest?

When the wall fell most of the crowd rushed away, but Nella and Prendergast remained rooted to the spot, each forgetting her

own danger in her utter absorption in another's fate.

"Stand back!" cried one of the firemen, but neither moved, as the dangerous hail fell round them. Something heavy, either a beam or a stone, hit Prendergast on the head, and she dropped down on the ground like a felled ox.

Nella started forward instead of backward for amongst the burning fragments she caught sight of two human forms.

Her knees gave way beneath her, and she sank down upon the grass, her hands outstretched in her availingly pity. There, just before her, lay Godfrey Somerville with his dead sister in his arms—so close, that his coat-sleeve touched the front of her dress. All were afraid to come near her, except Victor, who lifted Robin tenderly—as if a rough touch could hurt her now!—and carried her out of reach of harm; and Vere, who came and placed himself by Nella's side, wondering if her heart were broken by the sight before her.

"Godfrey, speak!" she whispered, woman-like, forgetting all his sins, and longing to call him back to his mis-spent life.

At the sound of her voice his eyes opened.

He looked at her long and strangely, as if his spirit were slowly returning from the land of shadow. His lips moved, she bent her head to listen, tears falling down from her own cheeks to his. "Don't let the doctors bother me—I want to die."

Then the heavy lids closed over the yearning eyes; and holding in his hand a withered rose, which had fallen from the front of her dress, he seemed to sleep.

(To be continued.)

The latest novelty in the male costume is a further development of that principle of economy which suggested no gloves should be worn. The new idea is to dispense with the waistcoat and have the trousers made somewhat higher. This too, is for the evening full-dress; but we hope that the leaving off innovation will stop at this.

A somewhat novel application of the photographer's art has recently been witnessed in the principal thoroughfares of the metropolis. An enterprising artist, who has hit upon the idea of producing a moving panorama of the "Streets of London," with their ever-shifting crowds and diversity of light and shade, has fitted up his apparatus on the top of an omnibus, from which commanding position he takes his views. The idea is to have them subsequently enlarged and accurately painted on canvas, so as to form a consecutive series of views embracing London life and London architecture as they are really presented to the eye. A finely-painted panorama on the lines indicated would, it is believed, be a remunerative speculation for exhibition in the United States and in the British Colonies.

AN ELECTRIC COUNTER.—M. J. Gaudetay has devised an electric counter or coulombmeter which is very simple. It consists of a cylinder turning by clock-work at the rate of one turn per second. The cylinder is furnished with teeth like the barrel of a monocular box, and arranged in circles at equal distances from each other. The middle circle, which divides the cylinder into two equal parts, has no teeth. On each of the circles next it there is one tooth, on those next that again two teeth, on those next that again three teeth, and so on. The needle of a suitable amperes meter or ammeter is adjusted so that its zero position brings it tangential to the middle circle on the barrel. When, however, a current of one ampere flows through the ammeter the needle is deflected to the first circle, and there the first tooth striking it works a counting apparatus. As the barrel rotates once per second, and the first circle has only one tooth, the counter records the number of coulombs. Similarly when the current is two amperes strong, the needle is tangential to the second circle, and is acted only by two teeth, thus giving the number of coulombs also.—*Engineering.*

SAYING "YES."

AUNT JANE sat at her open kitchen window knitting, while niece Maria made the tea-cakes. Her white cambric apron was smoothly tied over her neat dress—a light cotton sprinkled with rose-buds and forget-me-nots, which had taken Uncle Edward's fancy on his last visit to town, and which he could not be convinced was "too young" or gay for his wife.

And in sooth, Aunt Jane was pleasant and comely to behold, with her smooth hands of silvery hair, displayed as the breeze blew back her cap-border, and the expression of goodness and kindness upon her still rosy face.

She hummed cheerfully to herself, as she knitted, something "about a road beyond the skies," while Maria, as she mixed and rolled the dough, occasionally took up the refrain.

Presently there came strolling across the grassy lawn in front of the house two persons, one a handsome, manly-looking youth, and the other a pretty girl, with a laughing face and mischievous, dark-eyes.

They sat down on the green bench in the porch, shaded by the trellis of multiflora rose and white jasmine; and Aunt Jane, in a pause of her song, heard them talking together.

"Dear me!" she said to Maria, "why there's Dick courting Daisy again!"

"Well," answered Miss Maria, "it's more'n I would do. How often he's got to ask that gal before she consents to marry him, I'd just like to know."

Unconscious of these comments Dick was pleading his cause with the pretty girl of the bright, mischievous eyes.

"Daisy, I don't like to hear you talk about going home. Couldn't you be content to stay here and make your home with us always?"

"Well!" answered Daisy, slowly, as if deeply considering the question, "I like the country; and if—"

"If what?" said Dick, eagerly.

"If I had a handsome country-house, and a fine carriage—"

"Daisy, will you be in earnest for once? You know that I can't afford a fine house and carriage. But I love you, Daisy, and will do everything for your happiness that is in my power to do. Don't you believe me?"

"Well, I don't accuse you of telling untruths, Dick. But what is the use of always talking about such things? We're so young. I am only eighteen, and you twenty-three. Surely there's plenty of time for us to wait."

"I've waited over a whole year," said Dick, gloomily.

"Dear me! is it so long? But after all, what is a year to us, when we have all our lives before us? Why, we may both of us live to be a hundred years old, like that couple we were reading of in the papers last night, and then we may regret that we didn't enjoy our youth longer, instead of getting married so young. Besides, I believe in waiting. It is a test of constancy."

"My constancy needs no test!" said Dick, with firmness.

"But perhaps mine does. How do I know but that I could like some one else better than I do you?"

She looked at Dick, with her laughing eyes just visible above the bunch of wild-roses which she was holding to her pretty reticule nose.

Dick regarded her sternly in reply, and viciously brushed away an innocent lady-bird that was crawling on the multiflora.

"How can you be so cruel, Richard?" said Daisy, solemnly. "That poor insect never harmed you!"

"Look here, Daisy, I've had enough of this. I don't want to be made a fool of any longer. You will force me to do something desperate."

"Well, I can't help your doing desperate things if you choose to do them. You're old enough to know how to conduct yourself properly. And now I smell cousin's tea-cake

baking—I'm so glad we shall have my favourite tea-cakes this evening, and I'll just go and put my flowers in water before we are called in."

And she arose and tripped lightly away humming a gay song.

"That gal," said Miss Maria, who had caught fragments of the foregoing discourse—"that gal would worrit the life out of Job himself. I've the greatest mind to put away the tea-cakes for to-morrow's tea, and not let her have a taste of 'em to-day."

"Oh, she'll come round some time," said Aunt Jane, cheerfully. "It's the way with some gals, though I'm bound to confess that I never carried on so with my Ted."

Daisy went up to her room, and placed her wild flowers in water. And then, standing near the window, brushing back her curly hair, said to herself, a little remorsefully,—

"I dare say I do tease Dick too much, but I can't help it. I suppose it's my nature, and just—as Tabby there likes to tease the mice that she catches. But I don't mean to give up Dick—not I! And I'll be kinder to him to-morrow."

She heard the tramp of a horse, and looking out, saw Dick riding away on his beautiful bay, on which he always appeared so well.

"Oh, so he's gone to the Barnards," said Daisy, with a toss of her head as she watched him turn into the orchard road. "That's to pay me off, I suppose, and excite my jealousy. Well, he'll see. As if I cared!"

Cousin Maria might as well have carried out her threat of not producing the tea-cakes, for though Daisy made a point of devouring two or three of them with a great show of relish, they had lost their charm for her, and more than once she felt as though they were choking her.

The next morning she made a point of not going down until Dick had finished his breakfast, and she exulted as over the stair-banisters she saw how he lingered about the porch and hallway, pretending to be looking for missing articles, before he finally followed his father to the fields. It was a busy time, and they did not come home to dinner.

Daisy thought it the longest day she had ever spent, and she hardly knew what to do with herself.

But in the evening she put on a white lawn dress, with a rose in her hair, and went downstairs to where Dick was sitting on the porch-steps, pretending to read a paper.

He looked up wistfully, but Daisy passed him, and went out to the little front gate, where presently she was engaged in an animated chat with young Doctor Fenwick, who happened to be passing.

Dick knew that the doctor admired Daisy, and while they stood chatting together, he sat on the steps, scowling like a thunder-cloud.

When the doctor had taken leave and passed on, he strode down the walk and stood by her side.

"Daisy, did I hear you promise that—that fellow, to go with him to the picnic next Tuesday?"

"What fellow?" said Daisy, icily.

"You know who I mean." Dick was pale with jealousy and wrath. "And you know that there was an understanding that I was to escort you."

"I presume that I can go with whom I choose!" answered Daisy, haughtily.

"So you can, and I want you now to make your choice; but I tell you, once for all, that if you throw me over for that Fenwick, you'll be done with me for ever!"

Daisy was almost frightened at his vehemence. She drew back a little, as she said,—

"My goodness, Dick, what a temper you have!"

"You've driven me to it; you've made me desperate!" he retorted. "This thing must come to an end between us one way or the other, for I will bear it no longer."

She looked at him, and her cheeks flushed scarlet.

"What right have you to speak to me in that tone? I am not your slave, and I shall go with Doctor Fenwick to the picnic."

Dick looked steadily into her eyes for an instant.

"Very well," he said, shortly, and turning on his heel walked off in the direction of the barn.

"Dick," called his mother from the kitchen-window—"come in, Dick! Tea's ready. Come, Daisy, child, before the rolls get cold."

"I don't want any tea, mother. And, mother"—Dick paused a moment, and his voice seemed to lower and falter—"don't expect me home to-night. I'm going over to Uncle Fred's."

And he walked on very fast, as if not wishing to be questioned.

As Daisy entered the cool dining-room, where the family took their meals, Miss Maria was standing at the window with her arms akimbo, gazing after Dick.

"That boy," she said, solemnly—"that boy ain't himself. I shouldn't be surprised if he's driven to do something desperate," and she looked resentfully at Daisy.

"You don't eat anything, Daisy," kindly said Uncle Edward, who never saw much of what wasn't going on right before his eyes. "Maybe you think the weather's too warm for hot rolls and cakes? Well, take some iced-milk and berries and—Why, bless me! what's the matter with the child?"

Daisy had burst into tears.

"Please, uncle— aunt—excuse me," she said, and hastily left the room.

She did not go upstairs, but out-of-doors, where she could relieve her heart by sobbing unseen and unheard. Passing through the garden and the orchard, she followed the little footpath which led to a pretty strip of woodland, where, in a cool ravine, ran a narrow but rather deep stream between mossy banks.

This was a favourite haunt of hers. There had been a little rustic bridge leading to the hillside beyond, but this had been lately washed away after a heavy rain.

She could see, as she approached the spot, one of the posts still standing; and—wasn't that Dick leaning against it like a statue, his arms folded, and his eyes bent upon the deep, little pool which the rocks had just here pent in?

A sudden fear seized Daisy. Surely, surely Dick could not be thinking of drowning himself?

She stood still and breathless, watching him. Presently he started as if from a reverie, and, with lips compressed into a look of firm resolve, picked up a coil of rope which lay at his feet. Then he walked round and round a tall and straight tree growing close to the edge of the stream, looking up into its thick foliage, as if for a convenient branch to which to attach it.

Daisy's heart froze with horror. For a moment she felt paralyzed; but as she saw Dick carefully make a noose on one end of the rope, and prepare to climb the tree, the spell was broken.

She rushed forward, with a wild shriek, and threw her arms about him.

"Oh, Dick—dear Dick—don't do such a dreadful thing! Don't hang yourself, Dick—for my sake, don't! Oh, forgive me, forgive me, dear Dick, and I'll never, never tease or grieve you again!"

A strange expression came over Dick's face. He looked down into the white face of the sobbing girl, and his stern eyes softened. But then he said, gloomily—

"How can I believe you, Daisy? You have as good as told me that you did not love me; and without you I don't care to live."

"Don't talk so dreadfully, Dick! I—I do love you!"

"Answer me truly, Daisy! Do you really love me?"

"Yes," sobbed the girl. "Indeed I do, Dick! Please, please throw away that dreadful rope!"

"Not yet, Daisy. Do you love me above everybody else in the world?"

"Yes—oh, yes!"

"And will you marry me, Daisy?"

"Yes, I will, Dick; indeed I will!"

"When?"

"Any time—to-morrow—now!" said Daisy, in desperation—"if you will only throw away that dreadful thing and come home with me."

"There, then!"

Aud Dick flung the coil of rope into a thicket of laurel on the other side of the stream, and drawing Daisy to him, kissed her fondly.

"Remember you have promised to be my wife, Daisy."

"Yes," she answered, meekly.

And so, hand in hand, they returned through the orchard and the garden to the house.

"Of all the unaccountable creatures on the face of the earth," said Miss Maria, surveying them from the pantry-window, "room-mate to a young courtin' couple! I don't believe they know their own minds five minutes at a time, anyways!"

Uncle Edward was sitting on the top step of the porch, contentedly smoking his pipe.

"Well, Dick," said he, cheerfully, "have you fixed that tree with the rope all ready to pull it down in the right direction?"

"No," answered Dick, quietly. "I'll attend it to-morrow."

"Well, don't forget it, for the sooner that bridge is finished the better, if we want to get the hay over in good time."

Daisy stooped and looked straight up into Dick's face.

"You've deceived me!" she said, indignantly.

"No, Daisy, I haven't. You deceived yourself, dear, and I'm very glad of it, I assure you."

"Glad!" said Daisy, reproachfully, and with her face all crimson with blushes.

"Because but for that I might never have gotten you to say 'Yes'; and we might both have been for ever miserable. But how happy we are going to be for all the rest of our lives!"

"Still it was a dreadfully mean trick," Daisy murmured, as she allowed Dick to kiss her again, behind Uncle Edward's back; "and if you ever say a word about it to anyone, I'll never forgive you—never!"

S. A. W.

MALARIA.—It is calculated that more than 40,000 soldiers fall victims to malaria in Italy every year, and great numbers of working people are attacked. A map prepared by the Italian Minister of War shows that of the country's sixty-nine provinces only six are free from malaria; and in twenty-one provinces its ravages are very severe.

HOUSEHOLD ART.—If you have window curtains, hang them on a simple and obvious pole. It need not be very thick, and is better formed of wood than of metal, for then the rings to which the curtains are attached pass along almost noiselessly. The ends of the pole may be of metal, but I prefer a simple ball of wood. The pole may be grooved, and any little enrichments may be introduced into these grooves, providing the carving does not come to the surface and thus touch the rings, which by their motion would injure it. Whatever is used in the way of enrichment should be of a simple character, for the height at which the curtain pole is placed would render very fine work altogether ineffective. Small mirrors placed at convenient distances add greatly to the appearance of a room. They have far more than double or treble the effect of one large surface. A corner cupboard that has solid, unglazed doors, either flat or rounded, would gain richness by the insides of the doors being covered with choice bits of old Venetian leather, or, failing that, a painted diaper, perhaps with gold-leaf background; when such doors are opened, and laid back against either wall, the warm fine colour would be a valuable adjunct, not interfering with the brilliant beauties of shelved treasures, such as rare old china, glass, or silver.

BAINBRIDGE AND SON.

There was a suppressed murmur of conversation in the dressmaking department of the large drapery establishment of Messrs Bainbridge and Son, which the steady whir of a hundred sewing-machines could not wholly drown. Where the presence feminine can be found, be sure the tongue feminine will be heard.

The superintendent of the room, understanding this, did not attempt to enforce silence, so pretty Dolly Wynn and May Bruton talked very confidentially in their corner of the great room; and no one interfered, so long as fingers were busy as well as tongues.

And this was what May said, Dolly's blue eyes being riveted upon the quilling on which she was at work,

"I saw her yesterday when I was going out to dinner. She was just stepping into her carriage, and Mr. Edgar himself handing her in. She looks old—nearly forty, I should say; but they say she is immensely rich, and her dress was splendid. So I suppose her money goes against her age."

"Did you hear they were to be married soon?"

"Bless me! didn't I tell you that? My brother is in the stationer's where the wedding-cards are being printed. They are to be married on the twenty-seventh. Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Bainbridge, and the card of the bride's mother, Mrs. William Wilson. Twelve! Come, we will go for a walk."

"No; I am tired," Dolly pleaded. "And her friend left her, never heeding the sudden pallor of the sweet young face, the dumb agony in the great blue eyes."

When she was alone, Dolly stole away to the little room where the cloaks, shawls and hats of the girls were kept, and there, crouching in a corner, hidden entirely by a huge waterproof, she tried to think it all out.

What had it meant? What did Edgar Bainbridge mean in the long year he had tried by every masculine device to win her love?

She had not been unmaidenly; heart and conscience fully acquitted her.

She had given her love, pure, true and faithful, to the son of her employer; but he had sought it, delicately and persistently, before he knew that it was given him.

The young girl, now sewing for a living, had been daintily bred and thoroughly educated, her father having been a man drawing a salary sufficient to give his only child every advantage. But when he died, and his wife in a few months followed him, Dolly had chosen a life of honourable labour in preference to one of idle dependence upon wealthy relatives.

And yet in the social gatherings of these relatives, and the friends of summer days, Dolly was still a welcome guest.

It was at her Uncle Lawrence's suburban villa she had been introduced to Edgar Bainbridge. After this she met him frequently, and in her simple dress, with her sweet, pure face, had won marked attention from him.

With the frankness that was one of her greatest charms, the young girl had let her admirer know that though she was Lawrence Wynn's niece, she worked for a living in the dress-making department of Bainbridge and Son.

Then he had made her heart bound with sudden, grateful joy by telling her he had seen her leave the "shop" night after night, but would not join her for fear of giving annoyance by exposing her to the remarks of her companions.

After this, however, she often found him waiting for her at some point further from the establishment, and always so respectful and courteous that she was glad of his protection in her long walk.

But he was going to marry an heiress on the twenty-seventh, only a week away, so he had but trifled with her after all.

Poor little Dolly, crouching among the

shaws and cloaks, felt as if all sunshine was gone from her life for ever, as if her cup of humiliation and agony was full to overflowing.

But the dinner-hour was over, the girls coming in or sauntering from resting-places in the work-room, and the hum of work commenced again, as it must, whatever aching hearts or weary hands crave rest.

Dollie worked with the rest, her feelings so numbed by the sudden blow, that she scarcely heard May's lamentations over a sudden flood of order-work, that would keep many of them in the room till midnight.

"We'll have all day to-morrow if we can finish these dresses to-night," said one of the small squad of girls told off for the extra work. "Miss Brown says so. But these must be ready to deliver in the morning."

Talk, talk, talk! Whir, whir, whir! Dollie folded and basted, working with rapid, mechanical precision, hearing the noise of voices and machines, feeling the dull, heavy beating of her own heart, and the throbs of pain in her weary head, but speaking no word of repining, excusing her pallid face by the plea of headache.

It was after eleven o'clock when the last stitch was set in the hurried work, and the girls ran down the long flights of stairs to plod home through a drizzling rain, following the late snowstorm.

As Dollie passed down the staircase, she saw in the counting-house her recreant lover, busy over some account-books.

But for the heavy news she had heard that morning she would have felt sure that this sudden spasm of industry was to furnish an excuse for escorting her home at the unusually late hour.

But, if so, Dollie felt it was but an added insult to his dishonourable conduct, and she hurried on, hoping he had not heard her step.

She had gone some few streets from the shop, when, passing a church, she slipped upon a treacherous piece of ice and twisted her ankle.

The sudden pain made her faint for a moment, and she sat down upon the stone-work supporting the railings to recover herself. Beside her, not a stone's-throw away, a dark, narrow alley-way ran along the high brick wall of the churchyard, and the girl's heart sank with a chill of terror as she heard a man's voice in the alley say,—

" Didn't you hear a step, Bill? "

" A woman. She's turned off somewhere. He ain't come yet," was the answer.

" He's late to-night," said the first voice, in a gruff undertone.

" You are sure he's taking the diamonds home? "

" Sure as death. I was at —'s when he gave the order. 'Send them to my shop at nine o'clock,' says he, 'and I will take them home with me.' And he gave the address of Bainbridge and Son."

" But are you sure he will pass here? "

" Of course he will. He lives in the next street. He'll come."

" Suppose he shows fight? "

" You hold him, and I'll soon stop his fight."

Every word fell on Dollie's ears clear and distinctly in the silence of the night.

They would rob him, those dreadful men, if nobody warned him. They would spring out upon him as he passed, and strike him down before he knew there was danger.

He must not come alone, unprepared. False lover, false friend as she felt he was, she could not go on her way and leave him to death.

When she stood up, the pain of her ankle was almost unendurable; but she clung to the railings, and so limped along one street. The others seemed interminable.

Often she crawled through the wet slush of the streets; often on one foot hopped painfully along, till the shop was reached at last, and the light in the counting-house still burned.

The side-door for the working-girls was still unfastened, and Dollie entered there, reaching the counting-house, soaking wet, white and

trembling, to confront both Edgar Bainbridge and his father.

Unheeding their exclamations of dismay and surprise, she told her story, with white lips, but a steady voice.

" Waiting for me?" cried Edgar Bainbridge.

" The scoundrels! "

" You bought diamonds at —'s to-day?" asked his father.

" A parure for Miss Wilson, sir. I wish to present them, with your permission, on Thursday. Ah, look at that poor girl! "

For, overcome by pain, fatigue and mental torture, poor Dollie had staggered towards the door and fainted upon the floor.

A hasty call summoned the porter, and in a few minutes the porter's wife appeared, rubbing her eyes, but full of womanly resources for the comfort of the girl.

A cab was procured, and clothed in dry garments, furnished by the good-hearted woman, and, escorted by the porter, Dollie was driven home.

The next morning, walking proved to be impossible, and Dollie was obliged to call upon her landlady for assistance to dress, wondering at herself a little for caring to get up.

But before noon, sitting in the parlour, her lame ankle upon a cushion, she was surprised by two gentleman callers—no other than Bainbridge and Son in person—and a lady who introduced herself as Miss Wilson.

" We have all come to thank you," the lady said; " and I have come to carry you home with me. These gentlemen owe you their lives; I owe you my diamonds."

" But what did you do?" asked Dollie.

" We captured the robbers by a masterly stratagem," said the old gentleman. " Edgar sauntered past the alley-way, with a revolver all ready in his hand, while I, with three policemen, went round and entered the alley softly, behind the villains. Taken by surprise, their retreat cut off, they were easily made prisoners. You understand, we could not arrest them unless they actually attacked Edgar. As it is, however, there was a very pretty little tussle before we came up. Bless me, dear child—don't faint—he's all right! "

" My foot!" Dollie murmured. " I sprained my ankle last night. It was to stop to rest it that I sat down on the church wall."

" You didn't come all the way back with a sprained ankle? "

" Yes, sir."

" You are a heroine!" cried Miss Wilson. " But, my dear," and here the heiress drew nearer to Dollie, and took her hand in a close clasp, " we have been hearing, this morning, a pretty little love story, of which you also are the heroine, and I have come to see if you will be my guest until Thursday, and then make poor Edgar there the happiest of men by assisting at a double wedding."

Dollie's eyes, slowly dilating as the other lady spoke, were open to their fullest extent as this climax was reached.

" Edgar!" she said. " I thought he was to marry you on Thursday?"

A musical laugh answered her.

Calling the gentlemen at the same time from the window, where they had sauntered during this little scene, Miss Wilson looked up at them.

" Convince this young lady, Edgar," she said, " that your affection for me is only that of a dutiful son, and that I shall have a motherly affection for her likewise, when I become the wife of your father, Edgar Bainbridge, senior."

And then Edgar took the chair his step-mother-elect vacated, while the elder lady and gentleman went outside to arrange a cushion in the carriage for the sprained ankle.

What Edgar said may be imagined; but certain it is that Dollie drove home with Miss Wilson, and was that lady's guest until the following Thursday, when her wedding-cards, too, were distributed, and the bridal party consisted of two bridegrooms and two fair, blushing brides.

The daily papers, in noticing the wedding,

stated that the superb parure of diamonds worn by Mrs. Edgar Bainbridge, junior, was a wedding present from Mrs. Edgar Bainbridge, senior.

A. S.

THE mind grows narrow in proportion as the soul grows corrupt.

ALBRIGHT failure in any cause produces a correspondent misery in the soul, yet it is, in a sense, the highway to success, inasmuch as every discovery of what is false leads us to seek earnestly after what is true, and every fresh experience points out some form of error which we shall afterwards carefully eschew.

MR. ORELL LEVER'S new palace, built by a company which has been formed under the presidency of the Duke of Teck, is already rising on the confines of Battersea Park. In fact, it is the old Exhibition Palace of Dublin, which proved a white elephant to the Irish capital, transferred bodily to London; but in effect it will be a new building, and an addition to the sights of London. What sort of amusements is to be provided for the visitors when they get to the new palace is a part of the scheme not as yet developed, but it will be easy to make such a place attractive on the banks of the river, especially when the journey thither can be made by steamboat.

WOMEN AS FLOWER PAINTERS.—Many women are impelled to believe seriously that, because they are women, they must have an innate comprehension, a special instinct, which helps them to a right interpretation of floral mystery and beauty. They are encouraged as well by much talk of the dignity and sanctity of women's work, and a half-scoffful belief that "surely anyone almost can paint flowers!" So that, on an average, more than half of the innumerable flower pieces in our exhibitions are by women. In all this there is the confidence of ignorance; for, as a matter of fact, there are many who paint flowers creditably, and only a few, and those not usually women, who paint them worthily. The present high standard of art certainly forbids their being false to nature, or entirely mediocre; yet for "refined taste and delicate handling"—I quote a leading art critic—you look in vain. Painful memories crowd round you of the works of lady-exhibitors—medallists, art-school mistresses, and others well on in the profession; work all clever, conscientious, crude though careful, curiously trenchant, and wanting in qualities of mass and delicacy; and, withal, absolute, self-assured, as though the task of flower-painting was esteemed almost to trivial for the painter's powers. The true flower-lover cannot help shuddering at such scanty measure of observation and tenderness. The general effect is nearly always premeditated, prim, strained, and utterly lacking in the careless profusion of nature. The drawing and composition may be good, admirable—anything you will; but successful—if success means revealing to the observer, with a sudden flow of emotion, some subtle impression in nature till then unknown or half forgotten—no! successful they are not. They might succeed in interesting, would they only believe it, by the careful delineation, with M. Zola, of overgrown vegetables and realistic black pudding; but with flowers, as they might and may be, never. For if in painting them, besides faithful analysis and care, there be not added—what is less tangible, but more necessary—some degree of real love and understanding of their peculiar differences, their secret essence, their being, they must be, of all subjects, the most void of any but decorative interest. And if these public examples leave much to be desired, what shall be said of most amateur achievements? Of these ghostly tentative or wooden outlines (so frequently supported by a vague structure purporting to be an oriental vase), which partial friends declare to be "sincere and loving copies of nature?" I take it they had better be left alone.—*Magazine of Art.*

KNITTING.

Where snow-clad Alps their heads uprear,
Their foothills gemmed with lakelets clear,
Where every urchin who can spell
Can lip the name of William Tell,
Within a cottage quaint doth sit.
A maiden learning how to knit;
Her nimble fingers blithely dance
As in and out the needles glance,
And flash and gleam

Along the seam—
Her knitting's almost done.

Ab, Cupid, imp of starry nights!
Thou s'en can scale the Alpine heights.
The bow is bent, the arrow flies—
"Long live your love!" the archer cries.
Her lover holds the bright-hued skein;
The shining needles weave a chain;
And faster, faster now they fly—
What signifies a downcast eye?

A glowing cheek,
A maiden meek,
Has knit two hearts in one.

At, them to newer climes they roam;
On broader shores they find a home;
And soon their cosy, thatch-roofed nest
Is by their sturdy fledglings blest.
So many elbows to go bare;
So many knees that seek the air;
So many squirming, little toes,
Come wriggling, pushing through their hose,

To make score
Of hose, or more,
She knits from sun to sun.

Alas! the fledglings all have flown,
And some have boys they call their own.
And she who watched them at their play
So slowly, feebly knits to-day.
The furrows thicken on her brow;
She's toing off life's stocking now.
No missing stitches can I see—
But God above her judge must be.

She'll lay it down

To win a crown—
Her knitting's almost done.

watching the clouds of feathered spray flung high up in the sunlight.

The weather was complainant enough to "hold up till night," so they made their cruise longer than had been originally intended, and it was late when they were returning. A soft, balmy, August night, with a canopy of golden stars spread over the limitless azure above, and the moon rising like some fair, stately goddess—Diana, when she filled the Latman cave with her splendour as she bent to kiss sleeping Endymion.

Lord Urwick had gone away to speak to the man, as Muriel was left by herself; and suddenly an overwhelming feeling of loneliness came upon her as she sat there in the still beauty of the night, and—perhaps owing to the weakness that still remained as a legacy from her illness—slow tears gathered in her eyes, and fell down her clasped white hands.

"Crying!" exclaimed the Viscount, returning, so quietly that he was at her side before she noticed his approach. Then, after a pause, "Are you unhappy, Muriel?" he added.

She did not reply—a lamp seemed to rise in her throat and choke back the words she would have uttered; and Lord Urwick sighed deeply as he seated himself beside her.

"Muriel," he said, gently, taking her hand after a little pause, "I cannot help thinking we are both the victims of a cruel destiny, brought about, I candidly confess, chiefly through my own fault; but I can't tell you how earnestly I regret ever having linked your life with mine, and by so doing condemned you to misery. You believe this?"

"Yes," almost inaudibly.

"If repentance could atone—if by any act of mine I could free you, I should, indeed, rejoice most sincerely; but, alas! I fear it is impossible. When, on our wedding day," his voice grew a little unsteady, "you laid down the rule by which we were to regulate our lives, you forgot one thing—that we were both young, both human; and that the heart, refusing to be satisfied with such a cold, automaton-like existence as you proposed, would cry out for love! Am I not right?"

"Yes," she said again.

He looked at her very earnestly.

"And you have proved the truth of my words?"

No answer.

"Forget for a minute the position I hold towards you; look on me in the light of a brother, or a dear friend, and speak to me as one!" he exclaimed, urgently. "You need not be afraid that I shall think less of you for knowing what your sentiments really are, and at least I can give you sympathy. Tell me, Muriel has the love taken such a hold on your heart as to defy even your own efforts to root it out?"

He could feel that she was beginning to tremble very violently, but yet she did not speak.

"I understand," he said, still gently, although a horrible hopelessness was upon him; "and I confess your lot is verily hard to be borne."

She snatched her hand suddenly away, and put it, with its fellow, up to her face, which was burning hot and crimson like a rose. A humiliation deeper than she had ever known swept upon her like a flood; she had let her husband guess the secret of her affection for him, and he pitied her—pitied her for it!

Oh, the bitterness of that moment—would it ever, as long as she lived, cease to haunt her?

"I suppose," continued Lord Urwick, after a short pause, and with a mirthless laugh, "human nature was not intended to be happy, at least, such is my experience of it. We are always longing for the unattainable, and the fruit we could reach we will not, because we want that which is growing on a branch above our heads. Someone says life is a jest, but it seems to me a very sorry one; and, love—well, love is of all curses the worst that can befall us!"

"No!" exclaimed Muriel, raising her head, and speaking impulsively. "Love is surely of everything the most humanising and beautiful.

It is to us what light is to the earth—the warmth and loveliness, debarred of which all would be wrapped in deepest gloom."

"And love that meets with no return?" he asked, curiously.

"Even that is not wasted. You know, 'tis better to have loved in vain than never to have loved at all!"

"I do not believe it; but then man's love and women's love are different. With the one it is a sentiment, with the other a passion."

She said nothing, but looked out across the silver gleaming waves, with their phosphorescent brightness, to the yellow stars above—those silent, immutable stars that have shone down on the birth and death of human passion for so many generations, and will witness it unchanged for so many more to come.

A black curtain seemed to have been drawn over her life since the morning when she had started out, believing in her foolishness that the future might even yet recompense her for the past, and she would at last succeed in winning Cland's love. Now, she told herself, it could never be—she had been deceived with her own imagination, nothing more.

"If it is any consolation to you to know that you do not suffer alone, I can give you the assurance," he said, presently, "If you are unhappy, I am not less so."

"I know it."

"You know it?" he repeated, astonished. "Well, perhaps it is best, though I never intended you should. I cannot tell how it has come about, for certainly when I married you I regarded you with far other feelings, and I thought you cold and irresponsive as a marble. You are different to any other woman, with whom I have been hitherto brought in contact—you are a revelation of something higher and purer, and maybe I myself shall be a better man through having known and loved you."

"Loved me—me!" she exclaimed, turning her clear eyes full upon him. "Are you mocking me?"

It was his turn to look surprised now.

"Heaven knows I never spoke a more sincere truth! Why should you think otherwise?"

"Because"—in a very low voice—"I fancied you cared for Sybil Ruthven."

"So I did—once. I was fascinated by her beauty, and the strange charm she manages to exercise over men's minds, but I don't think I ever really loved her. It was more a delusion of the senses than anything else, and soon after I grew to know you as you are, even that waned—and—"

He might have added, her own conduct had done as much as anything else to break the spell, but on that point honour bade him be silent, and instead of finishing his sentence he bent down to gaze into his wife's face, which, seen in the soft, veiled starlight, looked strangely fair.

"You never guessed I loved you, Muriel?"

"Never!"

"And knowing it now, what have you to say?"

"This—that I am the happiest woman in all Heaven's beautiful world!" she exclaimed, her voice vibrating as it had never vibrated before, and with a sigh of supreme content she laid her head on his breast.

"And so, after all, it was me, and not Philip Greville, who had your heart!" Cland said, at last, breaking a pause that had in reality been a very long one, but which seemed to both of them exceedingly short.

"Philip Greville! What could possibly have put such an idea in your head? I was very sorry for him, and felt as if I, in some way, owed him reparation for the wrong my father did in taking the money Mrs. Maxwell left him in her unsigned will—and which shall be his in the future—if I have my way. But I certainly never regarded him in any other light than as a friend. How is it you imagined such a thing possible?"

"Various circumstances. The intimacy that appeared to exist between you—the reason of

REDEEMED BY FATE.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

At the Isle of Wight the weather was lovely, and each day Muriel gained strength and vigour, and was able to walk or drive, or go out for a sail in the *Bonita*, according as her husband wished.

She would have been very happy in her new-found health, and with Cland always near, had she not been conscious of the shadow lying between them; but sometimes she said to herself it was pity that prompted his kindness, and that, in reality, he felt the burden of her presence as deeply as ever; for she often came upon him when he was alone, looking as gloomy and thoughtful as if he were in some great trouble, which he did not know how to escape. Heaven knew how gladly she would have helped him, if she could! for her love was so pure and unselfish that she would have been more than willing to sacrifice her own happiness if by so doing she could have secured his.

"Are you almost ready?" he said one morning, coming into her room where she was standing at the window, looking out. "Why you are actually dressed—you possess the singularly unfeminine merit of punctuality!"

She smiled, and gathered up her shawls, which he took from her.

"It is a lovely morning," he observed, offering his arm when they got outside; "and if the weather will only hold up till night, we shall have a splendid day!"

They reached the yacht, which looked as fresh and clean as willing hands and mason-like labour could make it, and went on deck; and soon the *Bonita* was skimming across the blue waves like a graceful, white-winged bird, while Muriel, wrapped in a fur cloak, sat

which I never guessed, for you must remember I knew nothing whatever of Mrs. Maxwell or her affairs; and again, one night I saw him in the China gallery at Heathcliff, parting from someone I imagined to be you—for it was a lady, and she went into your room."

"It must have been Haidée Darrell," said Muriel; and then, feeling that the circumstances justified her in revealing it, she told Cland of the engagement that had existed between the young girl and Philip, and of their meeting in the window recess. "And the morning you saw him going from my boudoir, he had come in answer to my invitation, because I feared he had had a quarrel with Haidée, of which you happened to Sir Jasper Ruthven was the innocent party?" she said, adding, with a smile, "Why, he is so deeply in love with her that he cannot spare a thought for any other woman. And who, indeed, would glaze at us, when beautiful Haidée was near?"

"I should," he answered, a great joy in his heart, as he stooped to kiss her brow. "To me you are even fairer!"

"They, my love, is blind," she murmured, feeling a swift thrill of ecstasy flash through her veins at his praises.

"But that cannot be true. Love is keener-sighted than anything else, and that is why it sees so many more beauties in its objects than are seen by the outer world. The beauties are there, invisible to the casual eye, but all the brighter because they only blossom under the sunshine of love!"

And for those two the soft enchantment of the summer night grew more entrancing, the low sound of the waves, sweet as the music of the spheres—the hearts of both and the future years to which they looked forward in all the confidence of a faith whose bonds nothing but death itself could dissolve, were glowing with the brightness of "the light that was never yet on land or sea!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Mr. Darrell came to Heathcliff even earlier than had been arranged; he insisted on having Haidée's money settled on herself, and so there were several interviews with the lawyers to be got over, and matters to arrange that could only be done by himself.

What a sacrifice it was on the part of the lonely recluse to leave his home among the quiet hills, and mingle once more with his kind, can hardly be estimated, especially when it brought him amid the scenes that every recollection combined to render most painful. He did not go to the Grange—which would, indeed, have been hardly habitable without some preparation in the way of fires, to dissipate the damp that so many years' desertion had made inevitable—and thus it happened that father and daughter met together under the roof of Heathcliff Priors.

Haidée greeted him with a loving tenderness that had something of protection in it. He seemed to her even dearer since she had heard of his crime, and the expiation to which he had condemned himself—an expiation ten-fold bitterer than any retributive justice the law could have inflicted.

She tried her best to hide the change that had taken place in her own appearance since they parted, but the eyes of affection are keen, and it was the first thing he noticed.

"You are not looking well, my darling," he said, as they stood together in his room, whether she had come for the purpose of going downstairs to dinner with him. "I expect the life of gaiety and excitement you have had here—so different to that to which you have been accustomed—has been too much for you."

"Yes," she answered, hastily, not raising her eyes, but twisting her fingers in and out of his watch chain, as she had had a trick of doing ever since her childhood, "no doubt it is that. I shall get used to it in time."

"But as soon as the wedding festivities are over you must contrive to be very quiet, and

woo the colour back to your cheeks again," he said, kissing her fondly. "I cannot have my little girl develop from a blooming rose into a pale lily. It seems strange to think of you as a bride, Haidée."

"Very strange, papa. I can hardly realize it myself yet."

"And you are happy, my darling?"

"I am very happy—now, for I have you with me," she replied, gently; and to avoid further questions that might not have been easily evaded, she slipped her arm through his and led him to the door.

Downtairs, in the drawing-room, looking handsome and stately in his evening dress, waited Sir Jasper—a smile of perfect satisfaction on his moustached lips, and an expression as placid as if no single sin had ever assailed the purity of his conscience.

He had been telling himself what an exceptionally lucky fellow he was. Everything he had had to do with had prospered; he had swept out of his way obstacles that might have appalled any man less brave—he had won for himself a lovely bride under circumstances that, at the outset, had seemed hopeless enough to make him despair; and now he could look forward to a future of undimmed prosperity. No cloud, even as large as a man's hand, blotted the clear horizon of his happiness; no doubt cast its chilling influence upon him. He felt himself strong enough to defy Fate—for what was there could touch him?

Conscience! It was an old woman's imagination—the weakness of a mind that must be in itself inherently feeble. Remorse!—he knew it not, and laughed it to scorn!

"You look very charming to-night, Haidée!" he said, gazing on her where she stood, still leaning on her father's arm, with her cream-coloured draperies falling about her figure in softly harmonious lines. "Some women, whatever they put on, always have an air of being 'dressed up,' while your clothes seem to you like a plumage to a bird. But how is it you do not wear the flowers I sent you?"

"I forgot them," she answered, coldly.

The baronet's black brows met together in a slight frown, but he only shrugged his shoulders, as if he would say, "Woman's caprice! Who shall ever understand it?"

Prudently he glanced at the clock.

"I wonder why Sybil doesn't come? She ought to remember these are her last days of playing hostess at the Priors, and try her best to redeem her character for punctuality," he observed.

Just then there came a sharp ringing at the bell, and immediately afterwards—followed by a footman, who seemed to be expostulating with him on his abrupt entrance—there appeared Mr. Pierson!

"Sir Jasper, may I have a few minutes' conversation with you?" he said, bowing to Haidée and her father as he paused on the threshold.

"At the present moment? Certainly not!" responded Sir Jasper, haughtily. "And I would wish to impress upon you the very great objection I have to such unseasonable visits."

"Necessity knows no law, and I was not allowed to choose my own time. The business that has brought me here is important—"

"Important or not, it must be deferred!" interrupted the baronet, imperiously. "To a gentleman the presence of my guests—one of them a lady—should be sufficient, without any further intimation of the impossibility of my listening to him."

"The presence of your guests, so far from being an obstacle, I look upon as a very favourable circumstance!" was Pierson's imperious reply; "for what I have to say will, I am sure, greatly interest Miss Darrell, and if that gentleman is her father"—he stopped a moment, and Haidée made an affirmative gesture—"it will affect him in, at least, an equal degree."

Before Sir Jasper had time to give vent to his indignation Pierson went outside, and returned a minute later with Seaforth and Philip Greville; on the latter's arm leaned a

tall, bearded man, at the sight of whom the words the baronet would have uttered froze on his lips.

He stepped back and grasped hold of the corner of the mantelpiece near which he stood, while a look of deadly fear dilated in his eyes. But if the effect of the stranger's appearance was thus great on the baronet, it was not less so on Eustace Darrell, who seemed like one in a dream.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed, hoarsely, shaking himself free from Haidée, and taking a few paces forward, while his whole frame trembled with an agitation entirely beyond his control. "You have the face—grown old—of one who has haunted me all these years—the face of Charles Ruthven!"

"I am Charles Ruthven!"

A low cry broke from Darrell's white lips. "Are my senses playing me false, or are you spirit?" he muttered, keeping his eyes fixed in their terrified stare.

"Neither! I am Charles Ruthven in the flesh; the man who was supposed to have been drowned so long ago, but who his fall from the cliff did not kill!"

Comprehension seemed to dawn on Darrell. He turned round and fiercely faced Sir Jasper.

"Is this true? Have you crushed my life with a lie by making me believe myself a murderer? Answer!" he cried, furiously, and clutching him by the shoulder as if he would smother a reply. "Do you hear me?"

Sir Jasper shook him off contemptuously, and he staggered back, his feeble strength exhausted by the effort it had made, while Haidée ran forward to help him.

The stout, stalwart baronet folded his arms across his broad chest, and though his face was very white his eyes were as yet undaunted.

"What does this mean?" he asked, his gaze travelling from one to the other of the four faces opposite—each in its way as determined as his own. "Presumption has verily reached a climax when you force yourself thus into my presence in my own house—"

"Your house! Impostor! usurper!" cried out Charles Ruthven, interrupting him. "It would indeed be yours if blackest villainy were sufficient to establish a claim; but the time is past when it could avail. You have reached the end of your tether now, and even such consummate unscrupulousness as you are master of is powerless to aid you. I am not so much altered but that people will identify me, even as Eustace Darrell has done; and England shall ring from one end to the other with the tale of your infamy!"

Jasper Ruthven answered him only with a scornful smile. Yes, he saw the game was up, and there was nothing to be done but throw down the cards; still, though beaten, he would not let them triumph over his defeat even now. He had played boldly, had staked heavily, and—had lost!

After all he had not himself to blame, for the battle had been one of chance as much as skill, and no diplomatist, however clever, could have foreseen what had really happened. If only the *exposé* had come a day or two later, when Haidée would have been his wife! Then, though they had taken everything else, they could not have deprived him of her dowry. Well, fortune was against him, and so he must submit to the inevitable.

"And now permit me to say a word," said Pierson's smooth, suave tones, "and then you will understand how these revelations came about. I overheard a conversation between Matthew Seaforth and the German servant, and was convinced, from the manner of the latter when the subject was mentioned, that the cave where he had formerly carried on his smuggling operations held some secret that he did not wish us to guess, and which probably had to do with Sir Jasper, or—with a low bow in his direction—"the gentleman calling himself Sir Jasper—and, as I was much interested in all that concerned him, I resolved to fathom it. So, this morning, Seaforth and I went to the shore, and he led me through an entrance, most skilfully concealed amongst



["YOU HAVE THE FACE," EXCLAIMED RUSTACE DARRELL, HOARSELY, "OF ONE WHO HAS HAUNTED ME ALL THESE YEARS—THE FACE OF CHARLES RUTHVEN."]

the rocks, into a cavern, at the extremity of which, by dint of examining with a light—for the place was very dark—we found a door that led us into a passage, and from thence to the inner caves, where we found Sir Charles and my missing friend."

"And what brought you there, pray?" exclaimed Ruthven, turning his malignant gaze on the young man.

"I thought you would be able to answer that question without my assistance," was the significant response.

"Then you were wrong, for I had not the faintest idea as to your whereabouts—I only hoped"—with a harsh laugh—"I had seen the last of you."

"Doubtless," rejoined Philip, quietly. "From what has since come to my knowledge I should imagine you were very sorry ever to have set eyes on me at all. I know the truth, now, and your conduct is a mystery no longer."

"The truth!" he muttered, while Haidée, who had been a silent witness of these strange proceedings, looked up with even quickened interest; "and what may that be?"

"I am in a position to give you an answer," said Sir Charles, who still leaned on the young man's shoulder. "This is my son, Philip Greville Ruthven, and the rightful heir to Heathcliff Priors."

At the moment he made this announcement the door opened, and Sybil Ruthven stood on the threshold, looking in haughty surprise from one to the other, till her eyes fell on Philip; then she reeled back, a strange, dazed expression on her face, and a low, half-strangled cry gurgling from her throat. What she said was never destined to be known, for she fell prone on her face, a dead, heavy weight. Pierson rushed forward to raise her, calling loudly for brandy, and wondering at the complete inertness of her form as it lay in his arms. But when brandy was brought it was no longer needed—the shock the doctor warned her against had come; and Sybil

Ruthven, struck down in the flush of her youth and the bloom of her beauty, yielded up her passionate, reckless spirit to the Maker against whom she had so grievously sinned.

And so, in the late September days, when the mellowness of autumn was on the land, when the harvest had been gathered and garnered, and the trees were all aglow with crimson and russet hues, and among the tangled luxuriance of the hedges blackberries were ripening, and scarlet briony was wreathing its graceful sprays, Philip and Haidée were wed.

All misunderstandings were cleared up now, and he knew the reason that had forced her to withdraw her allegiance, and promise herself to Sir Jasper—Sir Jasper no longer, but a furious, disappointed man, who had left Heathcliff Priors to its rightful owner, and gone off to the Continent, where he might hope the echo of his sins had not penetrated.

Pierson acted as "best man" on the occasion, and declared that the only thing marring the pleasure of the day was his intense envy of the bridegroom, and his longing to stand in his place beside such a fair young bride!

We will hope that time may bring him consolation in the shape of a wife—and that before very long.

Lord and Lady Urwicke were there too, having travelled from the Isle of Wight on purpose, and people said they were a veritable *Derby and Joan*—or *Romeo and Juliet*, in all the freshness of their brief, bright romance. One fact was very clear, namely, that they were as happy as it was possible to be, and that life for them was at its sweetest, bathed in the sunlight of perfect love!

Philip had told Claud the tale of Sybil's meditated crime, and then they had both resolved to bury in their own breasts the terrible secret, and not let its shadow darken the fame of the dead woman, who had loved "not wisely, but too well." And so Muriel never knew of the drama in which she had uncon-

sciously played so prominent a part, and of which, but for Philip, she would have been the victim.

Once more the Grange is inhabited, for Mr. Darrell has taken up his abode there; and Seaforth has bought a cosy little place in the neighbourhood, where he has the satisfaction of feeling himself near his nephew, the future baronet.

Hermann, whose "occupation" has shared the same fate as Othello's, hurried off to his dear "Vaterland," where it is to be presumed, he is now spending the savings of the years during which he so efficiently played the part of amateur gaoler at Heathcliff Priors.

Sir Charles had regained in freedom some of the old energy that his captivity stole from him. This may be, in a measure, owing to the fact that a celebrated physician has done a great deal towards restoring his health, and he can now walk without the aid of the crutch that his former lameness rendered necessary. Still he leaves the management of the estate and all business details to his son, who shares, with his beautiful wife, the popularity of the county.

Of Philip and Haidée's perfect content, it is hardly necessary to speak. Their love has gone through the cleansing fires of tribulation; but surely it is all the better and brighter for the test, and surely also has Fate, in the joy of the present, redeemed the misery of the past!

They are both looking forward to the spring time, for when it comes round again they intend having a little tour all to themselves, and that tour will take them away to the pleasant "north country," to the brown, breezy hills and the violet-hued lake sleeping in their shadow, where they first met, and where—

"Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the chords with might,
Smote the chord of self, that trembling, passed in music out of sight!"

[THE END.]



[IN THE NICK OF TIME.]

NOVELITE.]

LORD BERESFORD'S WILL.

CHAPTER I.

I suppose very few rich men do give much satisfaction by their testamentary directions, but I question if many ever invoked by their last wishes such a storm of indignation as did John, fourteenth Lord Beresford, when he was gathered to his fathers at a ripe old age, leaving no relation but a certain distant cousin, of whom he had seen little and knew less.

The peer had never been a favourite in Blankshire; people never quite forgave him for marrying a beautiful girl who was an utter stranger to the fashionable world. They blamed him still more when she died childless, and, instead of seeking to replace her loss, he wandered aimlessly over Europe, leaving his beautiful country seat to the care of servants, and his hospitable duties as the great man of the county utterly neglected. It was enough to provoke any proper-minded neighbourhood. The young girls who were ready to be the second Lady Beresford married lesser dignities, and had daughters in their turn; the men, who had been the earl's friends, grew old, and were replaced by their sons, and still no news came of the absent earl. Not until twenty-five winter snows had melted on his young wife's grave did a rumour come that he was returning; and for once in the world's history rumour spoke truth. Before the county had well recovered from their surprise, a close carriage arrived at Beresford Hall; but, alas! the earl was not there. From it alighted the faithful servant who had accompanied him in his wanderings, bringing the news that his master had died on his journey home, and that his lifeless remains were all that could enter the home of his ancestors.

Blankshire fairly gasped. Who was the next heir? everyone asked each other. Somehow Lord Beresford's strange life had made their interest centre so entirely round himself that it had never come into anyone's head to inquire before which of the Earl's distant kindred would be the next Lord Beresford.

The family lawyer, a pleasant, genial man, was not at all chary of answering questions. A certain Keith Beresford, now a captain in the Guards, was the next peer; but it was quite uncertain how much he inherited besides the title, for everything was entirely in the late Earl's power.

"But he'd never disinherited his own flesh and blood," said the lawyer, with an air of conviction; "why should he? Besides, he took a great interest in this Captain Beresford; he bought him his commission, and many a hand-some present besides has come to the young officer from my old client."

The invitations were sent out in due form. Everyone who had been intimate at the Hall when its master lived there was invited to follow him to his last home, and not one refused, for curiosity ran high respecting Lord Beresford's will, and the neighbours were all anxious to make acquaintance with the new earl.

He impressed them all favourably—a handsome, soldierly man, of one or two-and-thirty, with the aristocratic Beresford features, and dark, thoughtful blue eyes, which had surely come to him from some other source.

"I was utterly surprised to hear of my kinsman's death," he said to an old general, who waxed confidential as they stood waiting for the reading of the will; "I had just received an invitation to visit him here—three days later came the news that he was no more."

"It is hardly to be regretted," said the general, succinctly; "my poor friend had little pleasure in life, I should say, after his wife's death."

"I remember her perfectly."

"Why, you must have been a mere child."

"Only six or seven, but I have a keen remembrance of Lady Beresford. I remember she came on a visit to us, and my father said she was the loveliest Countess he had ever seen."

"All the Lady Beresfords were noted for their beauty. I hope we shall soon be called upon to welcome another who shall uphold our old tradition that they are 'fair of face.'"

Keith smiled.

"I hope so, too. I trust that the next time we meet, General Cameron, I may be able to present to you my wife. Our wedding is fixed for the New Year, and I do not think it a disrespect to my poor cousin's memory to keep to the original date."

General Cameron walked off with a distant bow. The father of six portionless daughters, one and all of marriageable age, he may have been forgiven for not feeling best pleased that the match of the county was beyond them.

Mr. Smith appeared presently, with a grave, anxious face. He explained that his delay had been occasioned by the news that the will he had brought from London was not the last executed by the late earl. The latter document, drawn up within a month of Lord Beresford's death, had but just reached him.

"Are you sure it is genuine?" asked General Cameron, a little tersely.

"Perfectly! It is in my poor friend's own writing, and witnessed by a well-known physician and the British Consul."

A hushed murmur of expectation rang through the room. You might have heard a pin drop as Mr. Smith began to read. The will was very short and simple, barely covering a sheet of note-paper.

Every legal form had been complied with. It was in perfect regularity, but its conditions

were so extraordinary that the audience could hardly contain their amazement.

Beresford Hall and its broad lands, the town house in Eaton-square, horses, carriages, plate, and jewels, funded property, and money invested, in fact, everything the testator possessed, was bequeathed to his cousin, Keith Beresford, on one condition, namely, that within twelve calendar months of his decease the said Keith Beresford married Charlotte Althea Rosalie Annersley, the testator's dearly-loved and adopted child.

Upon Keith Beresford's refusing the wife proposed for him, or in the event of her declining to marry him, a sum of fifty thousand pounds was to be taken from the estates and settled on her unconditionally. Everything else was to be sold, and the proceeds invested by trustees in the funds for the benefit of whoever should be reigning Lord Beresford in the year of grace one thousand nine hundred and eighty.

A dead silence greeted this announcement. Mr. Smith finished the list of legatees to servants, &c., and then turned to the young heir.

"Lord Beresford," he said, simply, "allow me to assure you that, until this afternoon, I was as ignorant of the contents of this will as you yourself. I deeply regret that my client should have made such an extraordinary disposition of his property. For years I had looked upon you as his certain heir."

Lord Beresford answered the speech as frankly as it was spoken.

"And he had taught me to consider myself so. For the last twelve years, ever since my father's death, I was accustomed to receive a cheque for a thousand pounds from my cousin's banker. I was always told he disliked thanks, and positively forbidden to offer any; but two months ago I insisted upon writing to him to announce my approaching marriage, and begged that he, as head of my house, would grace it with his presence. His reply was long in coming, and then simply invited me here on a visit to him. I am utterly unconscious of having offended him!"

"His wife was connected with the Annersley's, said General Cameron, coldly; "at least, so I have been given to understand."

Keith bowed.

"I never heard the young lady's name before."

"Nor I," returned Mr. Smith; "but Lord Beresford was far from being communicative!"

"Would it be of any use to interrogate Gordon?"

This remark was hazarded by the solicitor when the guests had departed, and he and the newly-made Earl were left alone.

"To what purpose?"

"He might be able to give you some intelligence respecting Miss Annersley."

"I want to know nothing about her," replied the Earl, wearily. "If she were as beautiful as a siren, and as clever as a genius, it could make no difference; my troth is plighted, in six weeks my wedding-day will be here!"

"I am very sorry!"

A cloud came over the soldier's face.

"It costs me something to know I can never give my wife what I had hoped to lavish on her—wealth, luxury, and honour! But I have something of my own. With my pay my income amounts to eight hundred a year, so we shall manage; and—with a strange smile—"I suppose some day our great-grandchildren will come in for the inheritance we have lost."

Mr. Smith rubbed his forehead.

"I can't make out the Earl's making such a will after he had heard of your engagement. He must have known the condition he proposed was impossible!"

"I am glad it is impossible," said Lord Beresford, quietly. "Had my heart been free I might have been tempted to try and fulfil my cousin's wishes. I am a proud man, Mr.

Smith; and to keep up an earldom on eight hundred a-year is well nigh impossible!"

"You will surely remain here to-night?" as the Earl showed signs of leaving.

"To what purpose? Nothing can alter that will, or make me master of Beresford Hall! I would rather hurry up to town. I don't want my betrothed to hear of my misfortune first through to-morrow's newspaper!"

"I hope you will command my services," said the lawyer, gravely. "Our family has served the Beresfords for centuries. I do not want to lose the confidence of the last of the old line."

Keith smiled.

"I don't think the Beresfords are likely to need a lawyer until the year of grace one thousand nine hundred and eighty; besides, Miss Annersley, you'll have command of your banker. You are one of the trustees to the estate, and you are to be guardian to Miss Annersley."

"I don't think I shall accept the latter post."

"Why not?"

"It seems like treachery," said the lawyer, simply, "to forsake the Beresfords for a girl whose name I never even heard!"

Keith abashed himself.

"The treachery would be the other way in refusing my cousin's trust. I daresay the young woman won't be on your hands long. Eighty thousand pounds will soon produce trustees ready to deprive you of the care of her!"

"And I shan't be sorry, my friend. Miss day's work has not pleased me so far."

The Captain shook him warmly by the hand.

"I believe you are more indignant for me than I am for myself. After all, Mr. Smith, my cousin had a right to do what he would with his own. If I had only husbanded his annual present, instead of regarding it as a pleasant addition to my income, I might be better off now."

But as he journeyed up to town Keith was far from feeling as hopeful as he had seemed. For the last few years he had lived at the rate of eighteen hundred a year. He had felt so sure that Lord Beresford's generosity would continue that he had actually estimated his income at that sum. He was not in debt, but neither had he saved anything. In an expensive regiment, moving in the best society, regarded everywhere as the heir of a wealthy nobleman, it was hardly surprising that Keith had found money go pretty freely; and that the balance at his banker's was deplorably low.

"While the Earl lives I am positive he will never withdraw his generosity," the bankers had told Keith ten years ago, and their client had fully borne out their words. When Captain Beresford proposed to the pretty portionless daughter of a needy baronet he had frankly told Sir James his exact position.

"Lord Beresford would never allow you a thousand a-year, unless he meant you for his heir; besides, you are his next-of-kin. Lina has not been brought up for a poor man's wife, but I do not see that, with your income, poverty need touch her!"

And from that moment Keith was welcomed by the Trevelyanas as a son-in-law elect; and pretty Lina's dearest ambition was satisfied. She would be one of the richest countesses in England.

The Trevelyanas were not a rich family. There were many children and Lady Trevelyan had had to practise very painful economy to keep up anything like the position due to their rank. No wonder she taught her eldest daughter to dread poverty as a crime! No wonder Caroline grew up with one fixed resolve, that nothing in the world should make her marry a poor man.

She was very pretty, this eldest daughter of the Trevelyanas, and yet she reached the age of twenty-five before she found anyone worthy of her acceptance. Her hair was black as the raven's wing; her eyes, also black, were large and lustrous; her complexion had a rich warm

southern colouring; she was tall and stately, well fitted for her future dignity. Her maid declared she looked "every inch a countess."

"Do you expect Keith to-night, Lina?" asked Lady Trevelyan, as she came into the drawing-room ready for dinner.

"Yes, mamma!"

She was in pale gray to-night, out of compliment to her lover's bereavement, but purple clematis was twined in her dark hair, and fastened at her throat. Caroline loved colour dearly—bright brilliant colours, like those of a tropical kind.

"I hope the wedding will not have to be delayed, Lina."

"Oh, no; Keith says it must be in January."

"I shall depend on you to chaperone your sisters next year. Papa says he can't afford another season in London yet awhile," and the mother sighed.

"I'm sure it's a good thing Lord Beresford died if you expect me to do so much for the others," said Lina, cheerfully. "Why, if he had lived we should only have had eighteen hundred a year, all told."

"That is nearly as much as I have had all my life," said the mother, slowly, "but as things are, child, you will be very rich—nearly three thousand a-year."

"I hope Keith will make liberal settlements."

"My dear, he is generous himself. I often feel thankful for your good fortune."

Sighing like a sigh escaped Lina Trevelyan.

"Young, rich, handsome, and devoted to you! What would you wish for more?"

"Nothing."

But the tone was dull and listless.

Lady Trevelyan said no more. She did not care to acknowledge even to herself that her child's heart was not in the brilliant match destiny had prepared for her.

Sometimes she fancied love formed no part of Caroline's nature; for surely if it had it would have been easy to love one so handsome and devoted as Keith, Lord Beresford.

Dinner was never a very cheerful meal with the Trevelyanas when they were alone.

A rigidly plain repast at such times helped to stow for the expenditure at their parties.

On this occasion nothing but cold mutton and rice pudding graced the board.

Sir James was out—only the mother and her four daughters partook of the simple fare.

Lady Trevelyan was thinking that when Lina was a countess, and had married off two or three of her sisters, such rigid economy might not be necessary.

Poor lady! If she looked forward eagerly to that time who could blame her?

Dinner over, the ladies retired to the drawing-room.

Sir James returned, and poked the fire into a cheerful blaze, but there was a strange air of constraint over them all. It was a relief when the page came in and said a few words to his master.

"Very well," returned Sir James. Then as the boy vanished he said to Caroline, "My dear, your lover is impatient. He has sent up word he wishes to see me alone. I suppose he wants to go into the matter of settlements."

But one glance at Lord Beresford's face told the baronet something was wrong.

The young Earl looked pale and troubled.

He took Sir James's hand, and then waited in perfect silence, as though he could not find words with which to begin.

"There is something the matter!" said the Baronet, kindly. "What has gone wrong, Keith?"

He had always liked the young officer. He had told his wife more than once that Captain Beresford deserved something better than Lina's calm toleration.

"I am disinherited," said Keith, simply, at last.

"Disinherited!"

"Just that, Sir James!"

"You can't mean it! Your cousin may have

left Beresford Hall itself away from you, but there must be some legacy!"

"There is nothing"—the tone was strained and unnatural—"not a shilling piece!"

"But, then, who has it?"

"There is a legacy of fifty thousand pounds to a young lady; the rest is tied up under trustees to accumulate for a hundred years!"

Sir James threw up his hands.

"What a mad will!"

Keith said nothing—absolutely nothing. It really seemed that words would not come to him; he just sat there with his dark blue eyes raised appealingly to Sir James's face.

"It's a sad business," said the elder man, at last. "Here's your wedding-day fixed, and my wife choosing Caroline's trousseau!"

Keith made one plunge.

"Would you give her to me still? Oh, Sir James, I never meant to deceive you! I never thought this would happen! Give me Caroline, and she shall be happy, in spite of all, if only love can make her so!"

Sir James sat thoughtfully looking into the fire.

"I'm sorry, Keith—very sorry; and so will my wife be! You've been like a son to us!"

"And you will give me Lina?"

"Do you think it for your happiness? Your present means are not despicable for a bachelor. If you married on them you would need the choicer economy and self-denial!"

"I shall never be happy without Lina!" said Keith, fiercely. "I would think no sacrifice too great—no economy too hard, so that it gave me her!"

Sir James sighed. He had thought much the same when, as a needy, younger son, he married Lina's mother, and he never once regretted his choice. His wife might wish to save her daughter from such narrow means, but she had borne her share of the burden well and nobly. She had been a true and loving wife. Never once, by word or deed, had she reproached her husband for the lack of wealth their union had brought her.

The baronet's resolution was taken.

"I will leave the matter to you and Caroline," he said, kindly. "If she has her mother's heart I know what her decision will be. If not, and prudence steps in, remember, Keith, it may be better for you to suffer now than have a low-spirited, discontented wife. I promise you, my daughter shall be free to choose, and you shall hear her verdict from her own lips."

He rang, and directed the page to tell Miss Trevelyan that he wanted her.

As Caroline entered he took her hand, saying affectionately,—

"My dear, Lord Beresford has a question to ask you. Remember, Lina, however you may decide we shall not blame you. Follow your own heart, child."

And then the lovers were left alone.

CHAPTER II.

SOMEWHERE, far away from Blankshire, nestling among the Kentish hills, is a little village called Weston; only three miles from a thriving town, and yet so quiet and peaceful as to remind one of an ideal *lotus land*; the beautiful common stretching miles in extent, interspersed with picturesque islets, and covered in summer time with the beautiful purple heather.

A score or so of old-fashioned cottages, half as many mansions, standing back from the road, in shut-in grounds, many of them a mile apart; a post-office, if a letter box in a cottage window merits the name; one shop, selling everything, from a tallow candle to men's trousers, and a rustic inn; such were the chief features of the village of Weston.

In one of those houses alluded to, a sweet, old-fashioned, many-windowed, low-roofed dwelling, there lived a widow lady of the name of Arnold—a gentle, graceful woman of some fifty years, whose only joy in life seemed her niece.

Their house, The Grange, was one of the prettiest in all Weston. Its grounds, not indeed, of wide extent, but picturesque in their beauty, and looking lovely even on the December day when Mrs. Arnold and her niece arrived to take possession of their home.

It was a bitterly cold day, and the snow wrapped everything in a beautiful, white mantle. The household were assembled in the hall to greet their new-mistress, whom none of them had ever seen; for The Grange had been purchased by an old gentleman for Mrs. Arnold, and the same person had furnished it, and engaged such servants as he considered she would need.

"What a pretty room!"

These were Mrs. Arnold's first words when she saw the drawing-room—a long, low apartment, furnished in stony and pale blue satin, with rare pictures on the walls, and old china ornaments here and there.

"Don't you think we shall be very happy here, Cara?"

But the young lady addressed answered with a burst of tears.

"I shall never be happy again, as long as I live!"

Mrs. Arnold soothed her gently, and led her upstairs.

"Don't you think, dear, he would have wished you to be happy in the home he took so much pains to beautify for you?"

"And which he was never to enjoy," said the girl, sadly. "Don't be vexed with me, aunty, only I can't get used to being without him. I miss him more and more every day."

She grew calmer presently; and they went downstairs to the comfortable tea-dinner that had been prepared for them. Mrs. Arnold talked cheerfully through the meal; but Cara's words were few and grave, the girl seemed as one crushed by some heavy blow.

And yet she was a creature, fair to see; one surely made for love and happiness—a girl barely nineteen, with a delicate oval face, whose bloom reminded you of the wild rose. She had masses of golden brown hair, large expressive brown eyes, and a smile full of wistful pathos. The stamp of aristocracy was on her mobile features, and she moved with the grace that can never be learnt or acquired. She was dressed in the deepest mourning, which only set off her delicate beauty.

When they went back to the drawing-room, Mrs. Arnold drew her niece near her, and said, fondly,—

"You will try to be happy for my sake, won't you, Cara?"

Cara sighed pathetically.

"I feel miserable enough, aunty."

"He is better off," said the elder lady, gently. "He had many griefs and sorrows, Cara."

"But to die away from me; for me never to know anything of it until he was buried—not even to say good-bye to him; not even to see his grave!"

"You can see that easily, dear."

The girl's eyes flashed.

"And do you think I would go to Beresford?" she said, proudly. "Do you think I would foist myself on the Earl's notice, when he has never once condescended to remember my existence? I was his cousin's adopted child. He loved me as his own daughter, and the new lord never sends me a word or line. He treats me as the dirt beneath his feet!"

"It's not his fault, Cara."

"Whose else, then?" fiercely. "Papa used to talk of him, as if he loved him. He told me a dozen times that if he were taken from me I should have a friend and protector in his cousin. He never thought how that cousin would slight me!"

Poor Mrs. Arnold looked perplexed.

"If you only knew the truth, Cara, I think, you would pity the young Earl instead of blaming him. I kept the story from you, thinking to spare you pain."

"I would rather know it!" said Cara, wistfully. "Do you know, aunty, it hurts me cruelly

to have to think hardly of Keith? Papa loved him, though he had never seen him."

Mrs. Arnold gathered courage.

"You know your adopted father was very rich, Cara? that though we lived so quietly he was one of the wealthiest noblemen in England?"

"Yes; he told me he could never care for rank or grandeur after his young wife died. He used to say it would be for Keith to revive the grandeur of the Beresfords when he came into the title."

"Yes. Well, Cara, all the money Lord Beresford had, all his houses and lands, plate and jewels, were his to will away as he chose."

"And of course he left them to Keith. I think when he has all that he need not grudge us The Grange."

"My dear child, you are mistaken. Lord Beresford left his wealth to his cousin, truly, but encumbered with one condition."

"And that was—"

"Are you sure you can bear to hear it?"

"Yes."

Without a suspicion of how closely it would concern herself.

"The condition was that Keith married you; and, Cara—bear me out before you exclaim—at the very time the will was made Keith Beresford was an engaged man—his wedding day was actually fixed."

White as marble had grown Cara's fair face. She listened as a creature in a dream while Mrs. Arnold told her the contents of her adopted father's will.

"And he has nothing—nothing at all?"

"Nothing in the world but the title. This place, as you know, was bought by the late earl, and settled on you by deed of gift—in the event of his heir's refusal to marry you—an income of nearly three thousand a year is secured to you."

"How could he?" moaned the girl, passionately. "Oh! aunty, it is no wonder Keith has taken no notice of me; of course he thinks it is my doing."

"I don't suppose he does that; but you see, Cara, Lord Beresford cannot be your friend until either her or you are married."

"I shall never marry now."

Mrs. Arnold smiled.

"And I shall leave all my money to Keith's children; he will know then I didn't mean to marry him."

"My dear, he may never have any children."

"I thought you said he was to have been married next month?"

"Was to have been!"

"You don't mean the girl has refused him? Oh! aunty, she couldn't!"

"I do not know, I have never heard, but I should think it unlikely she held to her word. Your adopted father made her acquaintance directly he learned the fact of the engagement, and he told me she was heartless and ambitious. It seems to me, Cara, the very terms of his will were chosen to protect his kinsman from a mercenary wife."

"And how he will never have a wife at all," said Cara, sadly.

"He may change his mind."

Miss Ainslie shook her head.

"The Beresfords are not given to change, aunty. I am glad you have told me. Somehow the idea of Keith's slighting me hurt me more than all, but of course I understand it all."

So the two ladies took up their life at the Grange, and Weston welcomed them warmly. The idea had arisen that Cara bore the same name as her aunt, and Mrs. Arnold never corrected the mistake. It seemed to her the girl's position would be trying if her romantic story got abroad; and so no one in the fair Kentish village ever suspected that the graceful girl they all admired was Lord Beresford's adopted child, the heroine whom the young Earl must marry if he would possess aught but a barren title.

Of course, being in deep mourning, Mrs. Arnold and her niece avoided large gatherings,

but they saw a good deal of their neighbours for all that. Afternoon teas were very popular at Weston, and soon it became a recognized fact that The Grange was the pleasantest house to pass an idle hour at, its mistress had such a strange talent for making people feel at home—whilst Cara's was the sweetest face that had been seen in Weston for many a day.

There was one house near Weston closed, that is, closed for all social purposes.

A governess and a flock of children, indeed, inhabited it, but the master and mistress were in London; and Cara, with the curiosity of nineteen, often wondered what they found to keep them there in winter.

"Oh, my dear," said Mrs. Yorke, a pretty, cheerful young matron, "there is quite a romance attaching to the manor. Sir James and Lady Trevlyan are delightful people, only they are afflicted with a long string of marriageable daughters. There's none hereabouts considered good enough for them, so they are lingering in London, persevering in the attempt; but Caroline is twenty-five now, and never had an eligible offer till this year. We call it the 'forlorn hope'."

"But she is engaged now."

"Was engaged," corrected Mrs. Yorke, gently. "Oh, yes, it was a most brilliant match—youth, rank, wealth, everything she could desire."

"Did he die?" asked Cara, in a kind of awed whisper. "Why do you speak in the past tense?"

"He didn't die, but his riches did. He was disinherited, and Caroline did not appreciate being Countess of Beresford with only eight hundred a-year to maintain her dignity."

Fortunately, they were sitting in the firelight, so of course Mrs. Yorke ascribed the sudden crimson on Cara's cheeks to the heat of the ruddy glow. She rattled on—

"I told you the manor had a romance—now, isn't that one? I assure you Captain Beresford, the Earl I mean, is one of the handsomest men you ever saw. He looks just like a hero."

"What became of him?"

Mrs. Yorke sighed. "That's the worst of it. When Caroline Trevlyan jilted him I suppose he lost heart, for he disappeared."

"But he couldn't," objected Cara. "People can't disappear now-a-days, Mrs. Yorke!"

"They can, and do, most sceptical of young ladies. At any rate, Keith Beresford has. He sent in his papers, sold out of the army, and announced that he was going to be an artist. He always had a gift for painting. I suppose he was too poor to stay in the Guards; and after Caroline's desertion he wanted to be out of London."

"And where is he?"

"No one knows—abroad most likely. Money goes ten times further there than in England."

"I hope I shall never see her."

"Who?" a little puzzled.

"Miss Trevlyan. I am sure I should hate her."

"You strange child! She only did what nineteen girls out of twenty would have done—preferred not to try love in a cottage."

"But she blighted his life," said Cara, in a low voice. "If he killed himself, or did anything dreadful, it would be all her fault."

Mrs. Yorke smiled, she really could not help it.

"Miss Arnold, I shall expect to hear you make a very romantic marriage, your ideas are far too high-flown for now-a-days."

"I shall never marry anyone," returned Cara, gravely.

"You will marry before you are twenty," said pretty Mrs. Yorke, confidently. "I am quite sure of it."

"Why?"

"Because you look as if you were made to be loved and petted."

"Aunty does that."

But other people apparently wished to share

the task with aunty; before Cara had been five months at The Grange, in spite of the seclusion in which she lived, two gentlemen had both asked her to be the partner of their life. Both were young and possessed of ample means; either, in Mrs. Arnold's opinion, would have made her child happy, but Cara shook her head.

"Dear," said her aunt, gently, "what fault can you find with Sir Archibald? I think he is the man above all others, to make you happy."

Cara shuddered.

"I should be tired of him in a week. He is very good and kind, but he is so dull, half-an-hour's talk with him sets me yawning."

Poor Mrs. Arnold sighed.

"You seem in a great hurry to get rid of me, aunty," said Cara, petulantly.

"I should like to keep you always, dear, only you would be much happier married."

This little adventure was in April. Sir Archibald lived very near The Grange, and they continually met him in their drives; he looked so dejected and Mrs. Arnold was so sympathetic that Cara declared if they remained she should be forced into becoming Lady Alison in spite of herself.

"Let's go away, dear," she said, pleadingly.

"Where shall we go, Brighton or the Isle of Wight?"

Cara shook her head.

"We'll go somewhere where we shall never meet anyone we know; we won't give our address to a living creature; it will be lovely!"

Mrs. Arnold privately doubted that.

"Where would you like, Cara?"

"Somewhere where the wind is cool, and there are no fashionable people, where I can go about in a sun-bonnet, and no one will want to call upon us."

Mrs. Arnold groaned; but she never thought of crossing her spoilt child, and so The Grange was shut up; and one bright May morning she and Cara started on their travels, accompanied by small tin box apiece, and for sole protection and retainer Cara's black, dog Leo.

"We can buy more clothes when these wear out," said Cara. "I hate much luggage."

They went first to a seaside town on the east coast—a pretty little place enough, which in August and September was thronged with visitors who came to enjoy the fresh breezes of the German Ocean, but now in early spring was comparatively empty.

"Surely this is quiet enough, even to please you, Cara?" said her aunt.

"No, there is a visitors' list and excursions from all the big towns. Aunty, leave the choice of a place to me, and I promise you to find something quite too lovely."

Mrs. Arnold yielded; she always did yield to Cara. Had the girl been one whit less sweet in temper she would have been spoilt years before. The second morning after their arrival she went out with her big dog Leo; she was gone for four hours, and frightened her aunt nearly into fits, but she came back radiant, with the old sparkle in her eyes that had been a stranger to them so many months. "I have found the sweetest place—a dear little cottage, smothered in ivy!"

Mrs. Arnold was conducted to the place, and found it a picturesque cottage enough. It stood in a village five miles from their present abode, and about a mile from the sea; a small, unpretentious place, whose mistress, a respectable, middle class woman, told them she often took in a family of children in the summer. For a trifle over her usual terms she gladly consented to absent herself altogether and leave the cottage and her servant at their disposal. It was but a small place, she said, with proud humility, but sweet and clean, and the garden was a picture all the summer.

So, in less than a week after they had left Weston, Cara and her aunt were quite at home at Woodbine Cottage, and Mrs. Arnold ceased to sigh for her pleasant home when

she saw the change this place made in her darling. For it seemed as if the Cara of other days had suddenly returned. The Cara of The Grange had been a very quiet, languid creature, but the Cara of Woodbine Cottage was full of life and mirth. She was generally up by six, and home from her morning baths and busy in the garden by the time her aunt came down to breakfast.

The days never seemed too long. She helped the one servant with right good will, learning the mysteries of cooking and dusting. She made friends with every child in the village; took long rambles over the cliffs, and yet found time to play to her aunt "In the Gloaming" on the old piano—which a tuner from the town had quite renovated—or read aloud from the few books which had followed them into exile.

"I can't make out why you came," said Mrs. Arnold, one day, thoughtfully; "but I don't mind since it makes you so happy. I had begun to fear I should never have my own bright Cara again."

Cara kissed her affectionately.

"I wanted to be quite sure I could bear it!" she whispered. "Now I see being poor is not at all uncomfortable, and I can send him back the money."

"What can you mean?"

"I shall be of age in less than two years, and then I mean to give all the money father left me back to Lord Beresford, so that he may marry Miss Trevlyan. You won't mind a bit, aunty. You know you said you were happy here if I was; and I am. I feel happier than I have done at all since last November."

Poor Mrs. Arnold was speechless from sheer astonishment.

CHAPTER III.

KEITH BERESFORD looked lovingly into his betrothed's black eyes, as though he would read his answer within them. He had taken her into his arms, but she never returned his close embrace; she was passive and motionless as a statue.

"Speak, my darling!" he whispered, at last. "Tell me my fate, my own; but I cannot doubt it now, your father has left you free! You love me, sweet—you have told me so a dozen times! If there is truth anywhere it is written in your eyes! Darling, tell me, my cousin will make no difference to you, but you will be my own—my wife!"

"I cannot!—oh, I cannot!"

Even then he did not realize her heartlessness.

"I will not ask you to come to me yet," he pleaded. "I will wait a few months, until I have a bright, pleasant home waiting for my princess! I must get on if I am working for my Lina! With such a prize in view no labour will seem too hard!"

Very gently she disengaged herself from his clinging arms.

"Why will you make me say it?" she asked, reproachfully. "Keith, why won't you understand?"

"Understand what?" there was a strange light in his dark blue eyes.

"That all must be over between us. To act otherwise would be folly!"

"Your father does not think so. He told me he was a poorer man than I am now when he married Lady Trevlyan!"

"And what kind of a life has mamma had? One struggle with genteel poverty ever since I can recollect. If you loved me, Keith, you would not ask me to bear such a fate!"

"I do love you!" he murmured, softly, "and I thought you loved me."

She hesitated.

"I am not fitted for a poor man's wife! I should never make you happy. Keith, it is for your sake as much as mine!"

"No!" and his voice was bitterly in earnest, "don't say that, Lina, my every hope is bound up in you. I would bear any sacrifice rather than lose you."

"But I am not so romantic. It would spoil both our lives."

"Which means," sternly, "that you accepted Lord Beresford's heir—not the honest soldier who loved you as his own soul!"

She drew herself up to her full height.

"You can say so if you please."

"Can you deny it, Lina?"

To his surprise she burst into tears.

"I can't help it," she sobbed, pitifully; "I am so tired of being poor. I think I should have been a better woman, Keith, if I hadn't been so painfully aware of the value of money."

Keith looked into her eyes.

"Thank Heaven!" he said, brokenly; "that I am disinherited. I am, at least, saved the shame of being married for my money. You will never know what you have done. You have destroyed my faith and hope at one blow. I trusted you, I loved you—ah! Heaven knows how much. You have blighted my whole life, and yet I cannot curse you. You have been my first love, my darling; you were never mine, really; your lips lied to me when they kissed me—when they said they loved me—and yet their touch was sweet. You will sell yourself to the highest bidder. Little matters to you the man you marry so that he gives you gold. Farewell, Caroline, may you never suffer as I am suffering now."

He was gone, and Caroline Trevelyan went upstairs to her own room. By mutual consent her parents never reproached her for her decision; perhaps they felt she had not the courage and devotion which would have been needed to give Keith a different answer. She had acted prudently; perhaps they did not like to blame her, but never once did they commend her caution. In their heart of hearts her sympathy was all with Keith.

Sir James called on him, but he was out. A week later came the news that he had sent in his papers and left England; the next report was that he was studying art abroad.

"He may be a great man yet," said Lady Trevelyan to her husband.

"He will always be a true one," returned Sir James. "My dear, I suppose we ought to be grateful for such a practical child, but it seems to me something out of nature when a girl is more prudent for herself than her parents are for her."

His wife looked into his face and smiled.

"I don't think Lina has much heart. Perhaps it is for the best, James, and it may be my fault. I brought her up to long for wealth."

And where was Keith?

When his affairs were settled, Lord Beresford found he possessed five hundred a-year. This sum and his liberty was worth far more to him than eight hundred a-year and being tied to one of the most extravagant regiments in London; besides, after his disappointment, he hated London and everything connected with it. He went abroad, and studied in Rome, spending his time not altogether unprofitably, until in the early spring a longing came on him to return to England.

He meant to devote himself to art; love and marriage were closed books to him; he had no taste for society; why should he not live for his painting? Already one or two of his pictures had fetched a fair price; if he spent the summer in England sketching, he could think out at his leisure a subject for the Academy of next year.

He had no particular place in view, only it must be far removed from Blankshire; and so when a friend told him of the beauties of the Norfolk lanes and the quiet, secluded nooks in East Anglia, just the thing to charm a landscape painter, he was rather taken with the idea.

"But it will be full of tourists. I'm sure thousands of people go to Yarmouth every year."

His friend fairly laughed.

"My dear Beresford, Yarmouth isn't the whole of Norfolk; the county contains a few

other places as well. I ought to know, for I was born there."

"Really?"

"Yes, my ancestral estate is shut up until I earn a fortune or marry an heiress; neither's very probable. There are one or two old servants there. Look here, Keith, why shouldn't you go to my deserted halls; the old housekeeper will make much of you, and though the place is dilapidated enough, there must be a decent bedroom."

"Come down with me, and introduce me."

Mr. Leslie shook his head.

"The London season's in full swing; that has more charms for me than a lonely country house. I'll write to old Mrs. Ward, and tell her to prepare for your lordship."

"Do you mean it, Leslie?"

"Mean it, old fellow!" opening his eyes, "of course I do. A month of vegetation in the country would about finish me, but you people who dabble in art are quite another matter. I shall like to think there are other inhabitants at Kingston than the rats and mice. You'll be doing me a real service, Bereaford."

"Then I accept gratefully."

"I'll write to Mrs. Ward this very night. Poor old soul, she'll like a few days' notice in which to prepare for a real live earl."

"Not that," said Keith, speaking hastily, "you forget, Leslie, I have given up my title."

"You can't give it up, man."

"I must. The idea of a nobleman with five hundred a year, on which to maintain his dignity, is too absurd."

The other shrugged his shoulders, and gave in, thinking on the whole perhaps it was just as well. Certainly his old servants would have more comfort in believing a young artist was their guest than a real English earl.

One week later, when the June roses had begun to bloom, Keith Beresford returned to his native land. He spent one day in London making needful purchases, and then he travelled on to the obscure, rustic railway station nearest his friend's home.

An old man with an unpretending pony carriage was waiting for him. The grey-haired retainer welcomed the young guest with ready warmth.

"I wish you'd brought the master with you, sir. Eh, but it's a weary time since he came home."

"Mr. Leslie prefers London, I think, Ward."

"London!" and the old man shook his head, disdainfully. "It may be a fine place, sir, but it can't be like his own home; it's seven years ago come Christmas that he left Kingston, and never one of the 'family' has darkened the door since."

The two strangely-assorted companions became fast friends before they reached Kingston Bassett, the name of Leslie's home. It was a beautiful spot, and as he gazed on it Keith wondered its owner could bear to stay away. He understood a little better when he went inside and saw the faded tapestry, the vast, carpetless corridors; he knew that Charley Leslie loved his home, but could not bear to see it in its desolation.

The want of ready money was everywhere painfully apparent at Kingston Bassett. Besides, the Wards, a boy for the cows, and a girl to do the rougher portion of the housework, were the only retainers. The beautiful grounds which would have occupied half-a-dozen gardeners were neglected; weeds grew on the gravel walks; the grass was taller than a child's head. Within it was the same; many rooms were shut up entirely for want of furniture. It was like wandering in a deserted palace.

Keith had no cause to complain of his reception. A suite of three rooms had been prepared for him, but he preferred to take his meals with his kindly hosts. The golden butter, the sweet, home-made bread, and the rich, creamy milk were fit for a king's table; and when he retired for the night the old, carved bedstead and lavender-scented sheets were strangely conducive to repose.

It was just the spot for an artist. Keith found his friend had not overrated the charms of East Anglia. In this little village, almost forgotten by the world, he discovered many an object for his ready pencil, the prettiest bits of sylvan scenery; many a rugged bit of coast did he transfer to canvas.

But besides Mr. and Mrs. Ward he rarely exchanged a word with anyone. He went to the ancient church on Sunday, and saw the strength of the population, but there was no one whose face attracted him. Lovely as was all the still life around him, he never saw a human face he coveted as a model.

One day he went out without his easel; he felt in no mood for work. That morning he had read in the paper the news of Caroline Trevelyan's marriage, and, false and heartless as he knew her to be, yet the intelligence cut him to the heart. He had given her all he had—a man's first, tenderest love—and she was another's.

The bright June sunshine fell upon the castle; the sky was a cloudless blue, the air soft and balmy, and yet as he sat by the sea-shore watching the waves break and heave upon the shingles it seemed to Keith Lord Beresford that there was very little in the world to make life worth living for.

He sat lost in thought, he never noticed the passage of time; he had come out directly after dinner. He might have been sitting on the beach a few minutes or hours, he knew not which, when he was aroused from his reverie by a howl of genuine distress, and, looking up, he saw a noble black dog watching him with the greatest anxiety.

Keith loved animals, and animals instinctively trusted him. Finding his appeal disregarded the dog laid one paw on the stranger's arm, as though to enforce attention.

"What is it, old fellow?" and the artist's hand caressed the noble creature affectionately; "you don't belong to me, you know. What do you want?"

The dog looked more piteous than ever; clearly he had some motive for thus foisting himself upon the stranger's attention.

Keith felt a thrill of pity as he watched those speaking eyes—that dumb, imploring glance.

"Are you hungry, old boy?" and he extracted a piece of biscuit from his pocket. "I haven't much to offer you, I'm afraid."

But though the dog wagged his tail energetically, as though in gratitude, he never attempted to eat the biscuit; he began to howl again, and once more laid his paw upon Keith's arm.

The artist was fairly puzzled. He had forgotten his own melancholy musings; his whole mind was taken up by the dog's importunities, but how to find out his trouble seemed difficult. He was not hungry—indeed he was too well kept to be in want; his coat was soft and shone like silk; there was nothing homeless or deserted about him, though he still sat at Keith's feet and uttered those melancholy, despairing howls.

"He must have lost his master," said Keith, half aloud, believing he had discovered the key to the enigma. "Never mind, old man, you shall come home with me and stop at Kingston Bassett until we find him."

He rose, meaning to turn his steps homewards, but he was not prepared for the effect of this step upon his four-footed suppliant; the whole air of the dog changed, he wagged his tail in a perfect ecstasy, fawned on Keith, and even licked his hand; then he set off running away, turning back after a few yards to make quite sure his friend was following.

Not a little surprised Keith followed his four-footed guide along the shore until they came to a steep path which led by an almost perpendicular ascent to the top of the cliff (for there are a few cliffs even in East Anglia). Here Lord Beresford stopped. Kindness to animals was one thing, but to go up that

narrow pass merely to please a dog was another!

But the creature was not to be set aside; he whined, he growled, he even tried the experiment of inserting his teeth gently in the hem of Keith's trousers, as a mild incentive to him to persevere; and so, rather against his will, and yet his curiosity piqued by the adventure, Lord Beraford followed.

The path grew wider and easier as they went on, and when they at last reached the top the view was so lovely that the artist quite forgave his canine friend for his importunity. He stood perfectly still, almost spell-bound by the prospect before him. On two sides lay the German Ocean, beautiful in its dark blue waters, flecked here and there by the white breakers; far away beneath was a narrow strip of shingle succeeded by a broad expanse of golden sands, while behind him rose lofty, spreading trees their thick foliage almost hiding the tiny villages which nestled in their rear.

But the dog had gone on alone; turning round Keith saw him standing by something very white and still; and then he knew the motive of the dog's strange persistency—some creature was lying there in need of human aid, and he had been sent to seek it!

Keith walked quickly to the spot. Stretched upon the grass, the hard ground forming the only pillow for her golden head, was a young girl, almost a child; she wore a thick white dress and black shawl, a basketful of wild flowers lay at her feet, and a broad-brimmed, untrimmed hat was beside her. She had been clambering over those rugged cliffs attended by her dog, and some accident had happened, Keith knew that at once. As to the dog, deeming his work done, he settled himself by his mistress and looked complacently at Keith, as much as to say he now left her care in abler hands.

"I am afraid you are very much hurt."

It was the first time he had spoken to a girl since Lina Trevelyan broke her plighted troth—he had thought never to speak to one again; but he could not leave this poor young creature alone in her suffering; besides, she was not a fashionable young lady, only a village maiden, little more than a child.

She did not answer him; her face was white and motionless. A great dread came to Keith that she was dead. Stooping down beside her, he clasped her ice-cold hands in both his own; but even this had no avail, then, taking a flask from his pocket, he poured a few drops of brandy between her clenched teeth, and then he waited to see if all his efforts were of any use.

Very slowly she opened her eyes—such large, wistful eyes—Keith thought they read him through and through; he almost wished she would not speak; she was nothing but a village girl—utterly uneducated, of course. Silent, she looked the embodiment of a poet's dream, but when she spoke of course the illusion would fade.

He need not have feared, the voice was as cultured as his own, if very faint and trembling.

"Where am I? What has happened?"

"There has been an accident," said Keith gently. "I am afraid you have hurt your foot. Your dog came to fetch me."

"Ah, I remember," strength was returning now; "I sprained my foot, and I sent Leo to try and find someone. It seems so long ago."

"I dare say it was," said Keith, penitently; "I was sometimes before I understood your messenger."

"Ah, dear old Leo!"

The little white hand caressed the dog's silky coat, and he responded affectionately. Clearly these two were fast friends.

Keith began to change his mind, perhaps she was the daughter of a neighbouring squire, whom he had heard was expected home.

"Will you tell me how I can be of service to you?" he asked, a little stiffly.

"I don't know; I want to get home."

"And where is home?"

"Oh, I live at Hoene-by-the-Sea; but it must be four or five miles from here."

Keith felt he was right; Hoene was the village whose squire was expected to return to it.

"It is impossible you can walk," he said, gravely.

"Quite impossible?" and the soft eyes opened wider. "But I must get home; I have been out for hours."

"We are not far from Kingston Bassett, Mr. Leslie's place, if you would go there to rest a messenger could go to Hoene to ask them to send the carriage for you."

The girl laughed merrily.

"We haven't got a carriage. I don't believe anyone in Hoene has. There are the donkey-carts, to be sure, but they are all at market."

Keith could not offer a suggestion.

"To be sure there is the wheelbarrow," said Cara, demurely; "I wonder if they could trundle me home in that; it would take a long time."

Keith fairly laughed, he really could not help it.

"It would be a miserable journey for you. I think I can do better than that; if you will come to Kingston Bassett, I will drive you home in the pony carriage. It is rather antiquated, and the pony objects to be hurried, but I think it will be better for you than the wheelbarrow."

She accepted frankly, and rose to her feet, but it was evident the sprain still gave her exquisite pain, and that she would never be able to walk even the short distance to Mr. Leslie's.

"I have nothing for it," said Keith, abruptly, "I must carry you; the pony carriage could never get up here even if I left you alone while I went to order it."

Cara gave one moment's thought to the question; apparently she, too, saw no other course, and so gave way. Keith raised her in his arms; he was strong and active, she such a slight fairy creature that she was no burden to him; and so, with Leo in front as a kind of advanced guard, they pursued their journey.

"Are you Mr. Leslie?" asked Keith's charge, presently, when he stopped at the gate of Kingston Bassett.

"Oh, dear no! Leslie is a very great man, indeed; he is enjoying the season up in London. You will injure his housekeeper's feelings for ever if you mistake me for him!"

"Why?"

"Because he is the 'master'! In that one word lay volumes of feudal devotion, and I am only a friend of his down here upon a sketching expedition."

"He ought to be here to entertain you."

"We are too intimate to stand on ceremony."

They were at the door now, and Mrs. Ward received them with much amazement; but she was too good-hearted not to be kind to the injured girl, and too fond of Keith not to do all in her power for her impromptu guest. She pressed refreshment upon her while the pony carriage was getting ready, and finally insisted on her carrying away a goodly basket of strawberries.

"What a nice old woman!" said Cara, when they were fairly on their way.

"She is the beau ideal of a faithful family servant, and they are very good things in their way, I can assure you."

She smiled.

"You are speaking from experience?"

"No;" and his voice was almost stern. "I have no old retainers like Mrs. Ward and her husband, no grand old manor-house waiting for me to return and beautify it."

Cara looked at him curiously.

"Do you mean that you are a poor man?"

He smiled. "I have no wife."

"Very poor indeed," thinking of Caroline Trevelyan's prudence; "but I have my profession, and that makes up for a great deal."

They drove on in perfect silence until they

reached Hoene Church, and turned into the single street of the little village.

"Will you tell me where to stop, or shall I follow our faithful guide?"

"It is the last house on this side—a little cottage smothered in ivy."

But when he saw the house, he almost doubted it was such a humble little place.

"And you live here?"

"Yes," said Cara, demurely; "it is a little too large for us, but we don't mind that."

"Too large?"

"Yes, there are only us two, aunty and me. Won't you please come in and let us thank you properly for all your kindness?"

He called to a little boy who was passing to hold the horse, and then he lifted Cara down with tender care and carried her into the little front parlour, placing her on the sofa in the window. By this time a lady had come to meet them, and to her he explained the accident.

He felt more bewildered than ever; the aunt was as much a lady as the niece. She had that perfect ease of manner good breeding alone can give; but she was dressed in homely black. She wore a coarse sun-bonnet, and had evidently been in the garden gathering peas for to-morrow's dinner.

"Oh, Cara!" she exclaimed, "my dear child."

"Don't worry," said the girl, with a wonderfully sweet smile, "I'm really not worth it, aunty, and the pain's not much to signify."

She sank back on the sofa as though overcome by it, even as she spoke, and Keith saw that his kindest course would be to leave them alone. So he took his leave, first demanding permission to call again and inquire how the injured foot was progressing.

At supper that night, he brought up the subject of Woodbine Cottage, and Mrs. Ward told him she knew the owner well. She was a respectable lady enough, and well pleased to have secured such tenants as Mrs. Arnold and her niece.

"Then they live here?"

"They're staying for some months, sir. I did hear that the young lady had lost her father, and they came down here for her to get stronger before she went out as a governess; but that may be only hearsay. They're real ladies right enough, sir, though they're pretty poor."

It came into Keith's head that of all the girls he had ever met, pretty, delicate Cara was the least fitted to earn her own living; he knew enough of the fashionable world to be sure her very beauty would be an obstacle. What mother would care to have an instructor whose chances would cast her own daughters so far in the shade and captivate, it might be, the heart of her son and heir.

"Poor little girl," he thought, as the golden head rose up before him; "you'll have a hard life, I'm afraid, and plenty of danger in your pathway, as bad or worse than those from which your brave old Leo, defended you to-day."

CHAPTER IV.

For a few days Lord Beraford kept carefully away from Woodbine Cottage. He had done with women, they were all false and fickle. Why should he take an interest in Mrs. Arnold's niece just because she had a sweet, childlike face, and a pair of dark, wistful eyes?

"They are all alike," he muttered, impatiently, as Cara's image rose up before him, "she is not a whit better than the rest. In a year or two's time she'll be as accomplished a flirt as Miss Trevelyan—I beg her pardon—as Mrs. Edensor."

But still the golden head rose up as a vision before him; still the slight childlike figure stretched upon the grass, and guarded faithfully by its four-footed friend haunted him. He argued it was positive rudeness not to call, and inquire how Miss Arnold found herself after her accident; and so, about a week after

their first meeting, he appeared suddenly at the little gate of Woodbine Cottage.

It was a hot July afternoon, the summer sun-made walking weary work. The cottage door stood invitingly open and in the porch sat Cara herself, her golden head uncovered, a pretty trifle of needlework in her hand.

It seemed to Keith that her colour deepened as she saw him; he raised his hat and said courteously,

"I have come to see how you and my friend Leo are after our adventures?"

The girl smiled,

"Leo is quite well."

"And Leo's mistress?"

"Oh, I am getting on. I walked twice round the garden this morning."

Keith took a seat beneath the shade of the porch. Cara talked on with perfect ease.

"How do you like Norfolk, Mr. Ford?"

He started at hearing his assumed name from her lips as he answered,

"I am enchanted with it! I owe Leslie a thousand thanks for his invitation!"

"You told me you were an artist—there was a strange hesitation in her voice—"you said you painted pictures to well."

"Yes," he agreed, amused at this point-blank version of it. "I have adopted art as a profession. Are you going to commiserate me, Miss Arnold?"

"No," and her dark eyes sparkled. "I only wanted to ask you something. We are almost strangers, perhaps I ought not to trouble you; but you see, Mr. Ford, there are so few people here, and no one among them all who understand painting thoroughly."

"We are not strangers," said Keith, quickly, "and you could not please me more than by asking me anything you like."

"I wanted you to look at my sketches, and tell me whether I have any chance of earning a living by painting or giving drawing lessons."

Keith would have preferred any other request to this. How could she have had lessons in this out-of-the-way place? Her sketches might be promising, but they must be crude; his verdict must be unfavourable, and how hard it would be to give it with those clear eyes watching him!

"Aunty has gone out," said Cara, brightly; "so if you will come into the drawing-room we will look at my portfolio; she never can bear to hear me talk of earning my own living. Aunty would like to shut me up in a glass-case, and never let me feel anything hard or painful."

"I can quite believe it."

"I have made a good many sketches since we came here," continued Cara. "Had some idea of going up to London and showing them to a dealer, but it would help me so much to have a real candid opinion first."

He looked into her eyes.

"You really mean it?"

"Yes! I hate half-measures, Mr. Ford. Promise me, before we open the portfolio, you will tell me just what you think. Don't fancy I can't bear hard truths because I am a woman. I like people to speak out."

There was no mistaking her earnestness. Keith examined the sketches one by one, and then she turned to him,

"Well!"

"You have a great deal of talent, Miss Arnold, and it has been carefully trained; but unless you made some lucky hit it would be years before you earned a livelihood as an artist."

"Thank you so much for speaking plainly. Well! the artistic part of me won't be good for anything. I must be less ambitious and think of something else."

Mrs. Arnold came in then, and both ladies invited Keith to stay and share their evening meal. Lord Beresford never forgot that tea-table, with its simple elegance; the china bowl of great cabbage roses, the old-fashioned cups and saucers, the home-made bread-and-butter.

Cara put the subject of the sketches entirely aside, she seemed to have forgotten it. Keith gathered from her aunt's conversation that

they had lived a great deal abroad and only settled in England upon the death of Cara's father. The time passed swiftly; Mrs. Arnold was just the ideal of a hostess; she knew how to make her guest feel thoroughly at home. Almost before he knew it Keith had confided to her that his youth had been spent in the army; it was only when disappointed of a fortune he turned his thoughts to art.

"Were you very sorry?" asked Cara, gently.

"I think so; it changed my whole life. The loss of money sometimes involves the loss of other things, Miss Arnold."

"It may come back!" said Cara, dreamily; and then she went to the piano, and, sitting down, began to sing.

Keith listened, entranced; he loved music dearly, and he had never heard a sweeter voice. The girl sang simple old-world ballads, whose pathetic words touched his heart—songs of women's love and men's courage.

"Then you believe in love?" he asked her when she had left the piano, and Miss Arnold had vanished on hospitable thoughts intent.

"Yes! Don't you?"

He shook his head.

"Not in real life! There is such a thing of course, but it brings only misery to those who feel it."

"I thought love made every one happy?"

"That idea has exploded long ago. Women want wealth and grandeur, fashion, and rank to make them happy. To obtain these they would gladly trample love under their feet."

"Not all!" said Cara, gravely. "There are plenty of good women left, Mr. Ford, only one doesn't hear of them. You ought not to be so cynical!"

"To-night is not the time for cynical thoughts," he admitted. "Miss Arnold, I wish I could get you to do me a favour!"

"Why, that is what I said to you!"

"Ah! but my favour is more presumptuous. I want to persuade you to sit to me for the picture I am painting. Let me have just a sketch of your face, and memory will serve for the rest!"

Cara was silent. Her beautiful eyes were fixed upon the ground.

"Have I asked too much?" he inquired, gravely. "At least, do not be offended at my presumption."

"I am not in the least offended, only it seemed so strange anyone should care to paint my face!"

Keith looked at her strangely, but he saw she was not seeking for a compliment. She meant just what she said.

"I want to paint you as Ophelia," he said, presently; "Ophelia as she was before her presumption began. May I have the sketch, Miss Arnold?"

"If aunty does not mind."

The widow gave her consent. It was settled that the sittings should commence at once, and take place at Woodbine Cottage. Keith thanked Mrs. Arnold warmly, and then he went away, wondering what strange fate had sent those two cultivated gentlemen to live in that humble cottage.

When he was out of sight Mrs. Arnold put one arm fondly round Cara's waist.

"My dear," she said, a little hesitatingly, "have I done wrong?"

"No" and the girl's eyes were fixed in space. "We owe Mr. Ford a great deal for his kindness to me. If he fancies to paint my face in his picture he is welcome."

"He is quite a young man, Cara."

"Dear, don't be vexed, but if he should get to care for you, seeing you here, he will think you as poor as himself; we could not think him presumptuous if he loved you and told you so."

"He will never love me. I think, aunty, he has done his loving long ago."

"But if he should," persisted Mrs. Arnold, "consider the difference in your position."

"He will be immeasurably the richer of the two when I have restored all papa gave me to Lord Beresford."

"And you really mean it?"

"Certainly! I have never thought of anything else. I am only waiting till November."

"You'll be as poor as a church mouse!"

"I'm not afraid," and she kissed her. "We shall be very happy, aunty; if only you don't scold me!"

After that Mrs. Arnold said nothing more against the sittings for Ophelia. If Cara positively insisted upon robbing herself for Lord Beresford's benefit it might be as well for her to marry, even if her husband were only a young artist.

Cara's aunt was a wise woman; she never by word or glance hinted at her wishes, only she made the lord welcome whenever he chose to come, and she let him have many opportunities for a tête-à-tête with her beautiful niece.

And Keith?

It dawned on him by degrees that Cara was quite different from the women among whom his life had been spent.

He could not bear to think of her as out in the world dancing attendance upon the children of some purse-proud man, and yet he never thought he was in love with her.

August had come—the cornfields were a rich golden brown, the wheat was ready for the reaper's sickle.

Keith had begun to think he had put a very liberal construction on his friend's invitation, when walking home from Hoene one Saturday night he was met on the threshold by Mrs. Ward with a radiant face.

"He's come, sir—the master's here!"

Another moment and the two were shaking hands.

Leslie's greeting was hearty. Keith felt ashamed of himself for not being more glad to see his friend.

"Well, old fellow, so I took you by surprise. How go things? aren't you getting tired of being buried alive in this humdrum village?"

"It's delightful," said Keith, absently. "I could live in Norfolk for ever."

Charles Leslie stared at him.

"Well, I've come down to try and entice you to go to Scotland with me for the grouse. There's some famous shooting on my uncle's moors, and a gun heartily at your service."

"And you came all this way to ask me? Really, Leslie, you're a model friend!"

"Well, not quite—I've another errand."

"Yes."

The master of Kingston Bassett hesitated.

"Hang it all, I feel quite nervous. I want you to support me at an approaching ceremony. You'll stand by me, Keith, I know?"

"Then you've gone and done it."

"Ay! She counts thirty thousand pounds to her fortune, and was one of the best riders in the Row."

"And you're in love with her?"

Leslie hesitated.

"We get on very well. Lady Glocrina's a jolly girl—doesn't expect any sentimental rubbish, or that sort of thing."

There rose up before Keith the picture of a golden-haired girl, with liquid brown eyes, who had told him there was "nothing in all the world like love." The Lady Glocrina evidently held a different opinion.

"I hope you will be happy," said Keith, absently.

The other stared.

"Oh, yes; we shall do well enough. Kingston Bassett will be restored, and I daresay we shall go to town for the season every year. But you haven't answered me, Keith. Will you be my best man? The wedding's to be almost immediately."

"If you like a penniless earl, who's too poor even to use his own title."

"I shall like it amazingly, and so will Glocrina. Her sister Aurora is to be chief bridemaid."

"Oh!"

The two men looked at each other earnestly. "It would be the best thing in the world for you," said Leslie, eagerly. "Aurora's a fine girl, and well-dowered. Not so well as Glocrina, who inherits something from her godmother; yet still a tidy fortune. She's heard your

story, Keith, only it sounds like a romance. You'd only have to go in and win."

Lord Beresford was silent.

"At any rate, you will come to the wedding. I should think you were afraid of falling a victim to Aurora's charms if you refused me."

Keith consented. He heard Charles Leslie arrange that they should return to London together the end of the following week, and then he wondered what Cara would say to his departure. Would it make the least difference to her happiness?

They spent a very pleasant evening. Leslie was too full of his own future to make many allusions to his friend's chances with the Lady Aurora; besides, he was a cautious matchmaker, and saw that too much anxiety might defeat his own object.

"What do you do on Sundays?" he asked, abruptly, the next morning as they sat at breakfast. "Do you continue your artistic aspirations even on the Sabbath, Keith?"

Lord Beresford laughed.

"No! I face the population at church in the morning, and afterwards I smoke and stroll about the grounds."

"Not a bad programme! We'll follow it to-day."

"I'm afraid I can't," said Keith, with more constraint than the other had ever seen in his manner. "I'm very sorry, Leslie; but you see I didn't expect you, and so I've made an engagement for this afternoon."

Leslie stared.

"An engagement here in the wilds?"

"Yes, I am going out to tea. I shall be back in heaps of time for your eight o'clock dinner."

"I should not have thought there was a house in the neighbourhood fashionable enough to have afternoon tea. Put it off, there's a good fellow."

"I'm afraid I can't."

"Then take me with you. I don't feel up to a solitary afternoon in the halls of my ancestors."

It was choice of evils. Keith had not the slightest wish to introduce Mr. Leslie to the Arnolds, but he could hardly refuse his company; so the two set off soon after lunch, and strolled through the pleasant Norfolk lanes to Woodbine Cottage.

"You don't mean your friends live here?" said Leslie, as they came in sight of the humble dwelling. "Really, Keith, I shouldn't have thought you'd have taken up with the village rustics."

"My friends are ladies," said Lord Beresford, with great displeasure. "I did not force them on your notice, Charley."

Leslie looked at him with an odd smile.

"Is there a Miss Arnold?"

"Yes."

"Then I think I understand your reluctance to my plan for your domestic felicity. My dear fellow, it would be madness. You mustn't marry a village maid."

"I have no intention."

Mrs. Arnold received the visitors with her usual ease. Even Charles Leslie could find no fault with her manner, but to his mind that only increased his friend's peril. One glance at Cara's face, at the deepening blushes as she shook hands with the artist, and the master of Kingston Basset understood the romance of which the chief actors were yet unconscious.

"She is the loveliest creature I ever saw," thought Leslie: "but she is evidently fearfully poor. It would be madness for Keith Beresford to marry her."

And yet it seemed to him that must be the climax. To look at the two and not perceive their secret was impossible.

"Are you going to make a long stay in Norfolk, Mr. Leslie?" asked his hostess.

"No, madame; I have only come in search of my friend. I want his assistance."

"In other words," put in Keith, smiling, "he is going to be married, and wants me to support him on the occasion. I shall be very sorry to leave Norfolk."

"Then you will not return?" said Cara, slowly, her eyes cast on the ground.

"Oh, no! Charles is going to turn in the workpeople to make ready for his bride. I shall spend the winter in London."

After tea they went into the garden, and as was natural, Keith found himself at Cara's side.

"Do you know, Miss Arnold, this has been the happiest summer of my life?"

"It has been very pleasant," picking a flower to pieces idly, "but it is almost ended."

Keith looked into her face.

"Cara, shall you be sorry to lose me?"

She hesitated.

"Darling," he said, fondly, "don't you know all you are to me. I think I have loved you ever since our first meeting, Cara. Will you let me try and teach you to love me back again?"

The girl was silent, only the sweet face was cast down; the dark eyes could not meet his own.

"Are you afraid of being a poor man's wife, dear? You need not be. I will take care that poverty shall never press hardly on my darling."

"I am not afraid," she whispered, "if only you are sure you love me."

"I love you better than life," he answered. "Cara, I will be frank with you. Long ago, it seems to me, before I had ever seen your face, I loved someone else; but my darling, if I cannot offer you the first impetuous passion of my youth, I can give you the devotion of my manhood, dear. Won't you look up and tell me you will trust yourself to me?"

But her eyes were full of tears.

"Are you quite sure?" she whispered. "Sure that your heart will not wander back to her—your first love?"

"I am quite sure she deceived me cruelly. Her heart was never mine; before I ever saw your face, dear, her wedding bells had rung."

"Ah!"

"Then I may have my darling? Tell me, Cara, do you think you can ever learn to love me?"

"I don't think it will be difficult," she murmured, shyly. "Mr. Ford, I have nearly learned my lesson."

"Not 'Mr. Ford.' Call me by my name, dear!"

"I do not even know it!"

He was going to tell it her; his hand was still clasping hers, when Charles Leslie came up to them and guessed what had happened.

"Mrs. Arnold is asking for you, Keith," he said quickly; then to Cara, "your aunt promised you would show me the fernery you have made!"

Keith had no alternative but to return to the house. Leslie and Cara walked on in perfect silence.

"Mrs. Arnold, may I speak plainly to you?"

"I don't understand!" but she was shivering.

"I have known Keith, man and boy, for over twenty years. I love him dearly. Will you listen to me for his sake?"

"Yes; I would do anything for him!"

She looked so beautiful as she stood there in her white dress, the sun turning her hair to a golden glory, that Leslie quite understood his friend's infatuation.

"Keith loves you," he said, simply; "in a few days he will ask you to be his wife, perhaps he has done so already!"

"And if he has?"

"You must refuse him—if you love him. Miss Arnold, you will be generous and give him up; your marriage would only bring misery to both!"

"Why? We love each other!"

"My dear young lady, love is not all powerful. Were Keith nothing but the travelling artist he appears, I grant you the match would not be so unsuitable!"

"He is an artist," said the girl, simply.

"Ay, but he is something else beside. He is one of England's peers, an earl of ancient lineage and unblemished descent; he may choose to call himself 'Mr. Ford.' He thinks, I

know, his means make his fine title an empty form, but he is none the less Lord Beresford."

"Lord Beresford!"

Her surprise quite equalled Charley's expectations.

"You see the truth now," he said, soothingly; "he is nobleman, used to the highest society of the day. By an unjust will he was robbed of all that should have accompanied his title. In a fit of disgust he gave up the world, adopted the now *de plume* of Ford, and went about as an obscure artist."

"Well!"

"The whim will not last. Sooner or later he will tire of Arcadian simplicity, and yearn for the world in which he used to move. Only one thing can restore him to fortune—a wealthy marriage. If ever man were bound to see an heiress wife, that man is Keith, Lord Beresford."

"But he loves me!"

Charles Leslie felt annoyed. "He loves you, but if he marries you it will blight his life. With a young wife to provide for, how is he ever to enjoy the comforts and luxury which were his birthright?"

The girl faced round on him.

"Supposing I had been an heiress, Mr. Leslie. What would you have said to Keith's infatuation then?" she asked.

"The match would have been most suitable," he answered. "I need not tell you so."

The following morning Keith received a letter, written in a clear girlish hand.

"MY DEAR CLARE.—

"Last night your friend told me your secret, and that, instead of being the strolling artist, you were Lord Beresford. He said that if you married me it would blight your life; that you ought to choose an heiress-wife, who could restore you the fortune you had lost. Dear, you must not be angry with him; he must love you, or he never would have spoken, but it is hard to give you up! I have not told my aunt what you said to me. I shall not. I want you to be quite free. You will see wealthy, highborn girls at Mr. Leslie's wedding. If one of them touches your heart forget me, and I will never blame you. Only, Keith, if you love me—as I think you do—if you want me more than wealth—you will find me free and waiting for you! We are going away next week. If you are unchanged write to me at Woodbine Cottage in a month's time—the letter will be forwarded—and I will send you our address. Heaven bless you, Keith, however you may decide."

He read the letter through and through, marvelling at the generosity and self-sacrifice which ran through it. He upbraided Leslie bitterly, but that gentleman only declared he would be grateful to him yet.

"A month will soon pass," he said, calmly. "If you are still infatuated you won't have lost much of your lady-love's society. If you are wise enough to see the folly you have been guilty of, you will thank me for saving you from yourself."

So they went to Mrs. MacGordon's. She was the aunt and guardian of the ladies Ginevra and Aurora.

Perhaps she had heard Lord Beresford's story and his friend's benevolent designs for his future. If so, she seconded the latter generosity, for she always appointed the Earl as the cavalier of her younger niece, a pleasant, rosy-cheeked beauty, who from the first showed a very marked interest in the hand some Keith.

Lady Aurora certainly gave him every encouragement; but polite and attentive though he was, he never said a word to her that might not have as appropriately been addressed to her aunt.

There was nothing sad or dejected about him. More than one who had known him in other days declared that losing his fortune and his blighted bride seemed to have raised his spirits rather than otherwise.

"Well," asked Mr. Leslie, interrogatively,

as they drove together to the church on his wedding day, "what is your decision?"

"You did it for the best," said Keith, cheerfully, "but I was too far gone, my dear fellow, for your cure to succeed."

"You still love your love with a C."

"Yes."

"You'll be awfully poor—yet, hang it all, Keith, I'm not surprised. That girl's face is temptation enough to make a man reckless."

Keith laughed.

"I daresay our house won't be grand enough for Lady Gلورینا to visit us, but we shall have warm hearts within it, Charley."

And then, one month after he had received Cara's letter, punctually to the very day, he wrote to her.

"I have waited, darling, as you wished, but the result was what I knew it would be. I want my wife. Tell me when I may come and ask Mrs. Arnold for her."

The answer was very short and simple. Cara wrote that she was staying with her aunt at Weston. They would be very glad to see him if he could come down, and she named a certain day.

Keith calmly looked up Weston in the timetable, discovered it to be three miles from a station, and therefore limited his luggage to a small amount.

There is sure to be an inn somewhere in the village," he decided.

He wrote to Cara, naming the time of his arrival, and then he gave himself up to the pleasures of expectation. The houses he inspected during the two days he remained in London, the plans he made for his wedded life, they were too many to recapitulate.

Punctually at half-past six the train steamed into the station, and Keith saw to his intense relief that there were quite a collection of cabs in waiting, so he would not be reduced to carry his bag the three miles which divided him from Cara.

Her letter was so short he had hardly understood whether she and her aunt were staying with friends or living alone at Weston, but he judged the former, because the address of The Grange sounded far too imposing for their limited means. He was walking towards the cabs when a footman came up.

"Lord Beresford!" he said, inquiringly.

Keith remembered that Cara knew his identity; he certainly could have wished she would have kept it to herself, but he was too happy to be annoyed, and only wondered what the footman could want with him as he acknowledged his name.

"The carriage is here, my lord. Has your lordship any luggage?"

Keith resigned the bag, and followed the man to the carriage—a handsome brougham drawn by two gallant greys.

"I always knew she came of high family," he thought, as he drove along; "perhaps they have relented to her, poor little thing, now that she is never likely to want anything at their hands; it's the way of the world."

The horses bore him rapidly onwards, and before seven the carriage stopped at the entrance of The Grange; two or three servants were in the hall, and one of them came forward to receive him.

"This way, my lord!"

As in a dream he followed down a passage to an open door; he entered alone, and the servant closed it upon him.

"Cara!"

She was sitting alone in the firelight, her bright hair gleaming like waves of gold, but as she came forward he saw that she was changed. It was his own little love, but yet different. The Cara of Woodbine Cottage had been dressed simply as a village maid; this one wore sweeping robes of rich white silk, while in her hair and at her breast were knots of Parma violets.

"I thought you would come."

He took her in his arms and kissed her. He forgot the change; he asked no questions; he only knew that this was his darling, and she was all his own at last.

"And you are staying here?" he said, when he was able to take note of exterior things.

"Yes; we came straight here from Woodbine Cottage last month."

"And your aunt is with you?"

"Oh! yes."

"And you are not afraid of poverty?" he asked. "You know, Cara, I can never give you a home like this."

Her eyes filled with tears.

"If you knew how I hated this home when first papa died, you would not say that."

"Then it is your home?"

"Yes!" she said, simply; "my father left it me, but I never felt it was quite mine, and so I made up my mind to restore it to its rightful owner. I made aunt go to Woodbine Cottage, to let us see if being poor would be very dreadful, and we were both so happy that we don't mind it at all."

Keith looked round the beautiful room.

"And you have no regrets for your lovely home, Cara. You don't think you will be sorry for the giving it up?"

"Not while I have you."

"You will always have me, sweet. I wish for your sake I was a rich man. It seems now that my little love is a wandering princess."

Enter Mrs. Arnold in brocaded satin.

"Has she told you?" as she shook hands with Lord Beresford.

"She has told me she is not afraid of poverty," he said fondly.

"I don't think poverty can ever touch her with you, Lord Beresford."

He smiled sadly.

"My means do not equal my rank, unfortunately. I cannot give her such a home as this."

"But you see," whispered Cara, "it must be yours or mine. If I restore it to you or if I keep it, it cannot go from us."

He looked bewildered.

"Cara is not a good hand at explanation!" said her aunt, gravely. "She means that she is Charlotte Althea Rosalie Anerley, and that her adopted father was the late Lord Beresford."

"You won't be angry, will you?" said Cara, pleadingly. "I'm sure I worried about papa's will as much as you did! I made up my mind as soon as he had been dead a year I would give up The Grange, and all the money he left me! I thought then you could marry Miss Trevelyan, and be happy!"

"And now you will marry Cara?" said Mrs. Arnold, pleasantly; "and, remember, we never meant to deceive you. My child could not bear her romantic story to be in everyone's mouth, and so she bore my name. I was but too willing to give it to my dead brother's child."

"Mamma was Lord Beresford's niece?" said Cara, gently; "at least, his wife's."

"Mr. Leslie will be relieved!" said Mrs. Arnold, laughing. "I think your imprudence troubled him very much, Lord Beresford!"

Keith still held Cara's hand.

"And if I had been plain Mr. Ford?"

"I should have loved you just the same, only—"

"Only!"

"He never could have lived here, because you know I must have restored this place to Lord Beresford."

Keith kissed her passionately.

"And I thought once there was no truth or generosity in women."

"You won't need to live here now," said Mrs. Arnold, suddenly; "if you could make up your mind to be married in five weeks you would save Beresford Hall and its revenues."

"I would be married to-morrow," said Keith, warmly; "even if it were no question of saving Beresford. Cara, will you let me?"

"Not to-morrow!" said Miss Ainalie, blushing; "but before the time of grace is up, I mustn't rob you of your inheritance again!"

"I shouldn't mind if I had you. I never knew a name suit anyone better. Of course they call you Cara, because it means 'dear'!"

"They were not so romantic. I am called from my initials."

"Ah!" then laughing; "I shall write and tell Leslie I am going to marry Charlotte Althea Rosalie Anerley, and thus fulfil the conditions of my cousin's will. He'll think his prudent advice has prevailed."

In point of fact he did think so. Not until the Countess of Beresford was presented the following spring on her marriage did Charles Leslie learn that his friend had followed the dictates of his own heart. The master of Kingston Bassett, who found the Lady Gلورینا somewhat uncongenial, in spite of her fortune and her fine riding, smothered a sigh when he met the Earl, and managed to congratulate him cordially, observing at the same time that he seemed to have secured happiness and his own choice, in spite of Lord Beresford's Will!

[THE END.]

A MORTIFYING EXPERIENCE.—One of the most mortifying experiences in the life of a man is to have somebody ask him the time of day while his watch is at the jeweller's for repairs. He absent-mindedly takes out a bunch of keys attached to the chain for the purpose of keeping it in place, and the more he says "jeweller," the more the other fellow says "pawnbroker."

THE TRICK OR GRIEF.—In a home where the mother is always weighed down with care, even the children seem to catch "the trick of grief." Therefore, mothers, laugh more. The housekeeping is so onerous, the children so often trying to nerves and tempers, the servant most exasperating, and even John, kind, good husband that he is, cannot understand all our vexations and discouragements and perplexities, and so wearied do we sometimes feel that it is too much for the household to depend on us, in addition to all our cares, for social sunshine as well. Yet the household does, and it must. Father may be bright and cheery, his laugh ring out, but if the mother's laugh fails, even the father's cheerfulness seems to lose some of its infection.

DANGEROUS.—The married flirt brings terror and dismay into every circle she invades. She means mischief. Women know her and fear her. She has marred many a match, destroyed many an air castle, ruined many a season. If real nursing, not loud but deep, could kill, she would have been dead long ago. But she is perennial. She pervades all places, and spoils all plans. She gets a new zest from the disappointments of others, and like the vampire, feeds upon the heart's blood of young hopes. No summer resort is without her. From the hotel of high degree to the meek and lowly camp, meeting she is omnipresent. The trail of the serpent is over them all. The married flirt is not only multifarious, but multifarious. She is of all ages and degrees, of all classes and conditions. One season she is languid and languishing, another she is fast and furious. Now she is demure and devout, and again she is flighty and frivolous. You like her limp and lymphatic, and are surprised to like her better brisk and soubrette. One day she is shrinking and skittish, the next she is audacious and impudent. She takes her cue from Cleopatra: "Age cannot wither her nor custom stale her infinite variety." She is also absolutely apostolic; she is all things to all men, and although the danger signals are always out, she finds a fool every time she takes the trouble to open her eyes. And the whole thing is so easy to her; no care, no worry, no fretting, but plenty of folly. It is no wonder the young girl is distanced. There is no risk, no danger of failing. Breach of promise suits are as foreign to the married flirt's thoughts as genuine sentiment. She is fascinating, but you cannot call her false. She is evidently fitted to conjugate love in all its moods and tenses; but the sense of safety makes her cruel.

FACETIA.

A BAD NAME.—An ill-made coat.

What is that which ties two persons but only touches one?—A wedding-ring.

What cardinal virtue does water represent when frozen?—Justice.

What word would express John accompanied by monkeys?—Jack-and-Japes.

What garment is the most unpleasant to travel in by railway?—A jerkin.

The reason men succeed who mind their own business, is because there is so little competition.

DINING is a fine art. So is getting an invitation to dinner where you are not particularly wanted.

WHEN a woman wishes to be very affectionate to her lover she calls him a "naughty man."

A girl has been arrested while disguised as an old woman. The old woman disguised as a girl is still at large.

"I am going to turn over a new leaf," as the caterpillar remarked when he had successfully ruined the one he was on.

A tramp man kept a loaded revolver under his pillow, and the car on which he usually slept is not there any more.

The man who blows his brains out because a lady has refused to marry him confirms the good judgment of the lady in the most positive way.

PHOTOGRAPHER: "Don't like your pictures! Why you couldn't have a better likeness?" Brown: "That's just what's the matter, confound it!"

TRUEY benevolence is a widespread virtue for what man is there among us who does not begin each new day by clothing the naked and feeding the hungry?

We have an unutterable longing to hear of the actor or *prized* whose season just closed has not been the most profitable in their whole career.

"Do you call that chilly vinegar?" gasped a red-faced old gentleman, with tears in his eyes. "It's the hottest thing I ever tasted in my life."

A NEWSPAPER editor in Constantinople has been sentenced to imprisonment for life for calling the Sultan a "half-headed old imbecile." There appears to be very little encouragement to tell the truth in Constantinople.

It is related of Sydney Smith that on entering a drawing-room in a West-end mansion, he found it lined with mirrors on all sides. Finding himself reflected in every direction, he said that he "supposed he was at a meeting of the clergy, and there seemed to be a very respectable attendance."

DOWNBROOK IN THE KITCHEN.—Waiter (to cook) "George, gent in number three says *an* his potatoes ain't good—says as they've all got black eyes in 'em." George (real name Patrick): "Bedad, then, it's no fault o' mine! The spalpeens must have been fightin' after I put 'em in the pot!"

A BOWLING man who wished to exchange his adipose tissue for muscle, went to a well-known physician up the river for advice. "Do you eat butter and fat?" asked the leech. "Yes," said the client. "Well, you must knock off that," returned the doctor. "Do you drink beer and spirits?" continued he. "Yes." "Then you must knock off that. Do you smoke?" inquired the medical man, feeling for his stethoscope. "Yes," said the oarsman. "Then you must knock off that." "What is your fee?" inquired the athlete. "Two guineas," murmured the medical man, with a faint smile of expectation. "Well, you must knock off that," said the candidate for aquatic honours as he seized his hat and made way for the next patient.

"I live in Jellicle's eyes," said an affected dandy in Colman's hearing. "I don't wonder at it," replied George, "since I observed she had a *sty* in them when I saw her last."

SAM loving wife to her husband: "Do you know, dear, that butterfly ornaments are very fashionable?"—"Perhaps so," he gruffly replied, "but grub is the great desideratum."

A LADY of irascible temper asked George Selwyn why woman was made of the rib. "Indeed, I can't say," was his reply, "unless it be that the rib is the most crooked part of the body."

"Mr. *one* is just here," said a citizen to a lawyer. "The plaintiff will swear I hit him. I will swear that I did not. Now what can you lawyers make out of that if we go to trial?" "Twenty-five pounds," was the reply.

MISS BITTERLY poked her bachelor friend, Old Pump, in the ribs with her umbrella, and asked: "Do you believe in woman's rights?" "Yes," he answered, "and I love to celebrate them." "Celebrate them? What do you mean?" "I mean her funeral rites."

A LITTLE girl in Sunday-school who had been pulling her doll to pieces during the week, was asked by the teacher: "What was Adam made of?" "Dust," replied the little girl. "And what was Eve made of?" "Dust," was the answer.

"My dear sir," observed Jekyll to a judge, who was alike notorious for his greed of office and his want of personal cleanliness, "you have asked the minister for almost everything else, why don't you ask him for a piece of soap and a nail-brush?"

"MAMMIE," cried a little four-year-old girl, after coming from walking with her next oldest sister. "Mamie shoved against me and pushed me down right before some gentlemen, and hurt me, too." "Well, it doesn't hurt you now, does it? Then why do you cry?" "Cause I didn't cry any when she pushed me down."

It is not given to every one, perhaps fortunately for the general peace, to be as ready at retort as the critic to whom the following question was addressed by an artist: "Don't you think it is about time I exhibited as nothing?" "Yes; a little 'talent!'" was the critic's reply.

A LITTLE fellow of five going along the street with a bag is stopped by a kind-hearted gentleman, who says: "Where are you going, my little man?" "To school." "And what do you do at school? You learn to read?" "No." "To write?" "No." "To reckon?" "No." "What do you do?" "I wait for school to come out."

An attorney-at-law who wished to show his smartness by quizzing an old farmer, began by asking him if there were any girls in his neighbourhood. "Yes," said the old man, "there's a dreadful sight of 'em—so many that there ain't half enough respectable husbands for 'em, and so some of 'em are beginning to take up with lawyers." The attorney didn't "follow up the subject."

LITTLE five-year-old Annie, who was suffering from a bad cold, went to pay a visit to auntie. During the day she related her successes at school, and ended by declaring that she could read a great deal better than Sabrina, who was eight years old. "Well," questioned auntie, "wouldn't it sound better if some one else said it?" "Yes," answered Annie, with a sober countenance, "I think it would—I have such a bad cold, I can't say it very well."

JEAN HIROUX appears for the hundredth time before the judge, Judge: "Prisoner, you are incorrigible! You know, I suppose, what has brought you here again?" Jean Hiroux: "Mon President, we are old acquaintances, are we not? So, when I saw in the papers that Madame la Présidente had given birth to a little boy, I at once got myself taken up to have the chance of congratulating you and inquiring how the mother and child are progressing."

"Give me a nice polish, youngster!" said a Gaiety masher. "I can't," said the lad; "it would take a cleverer man than me to do that. But I can polish boots, sir."

A PLANT has been found that cures bashfulness. It should be promptly tried on the man who leaves the hotel by the back window because he is too diffident to say good-bye to the cashier.

SPRIT OF THE AGE.—A widow said to her daughter, "When you are at my age, it will be time enough to dream of a husband." "Yes, mamma," replied the thoughtless girl, "for a second time."

"WILLIAM," said a teacher to one of his pupils, "can you tell me why the sun rises in the east?"—"Don't know, sir," replied William, "I *kept* it be that the east makes everything rise." Teacher fainted.

"Who is that lovely girl?" exclaimed the wistful Lord Norbury, in company with his friend Grant. "Miss Glass," replied the learned counsel. "Glass!" reiterated the facetious Judge. "I should be intoxicated could I place such a glass to my lips."

"WHY," asked a superintendent, fixing his eye on the teacher of a young ladies' Bible class, "when does man most keenly realise his own utter nothingness?" And the young man, who had led himself to the altar only two short weeks ago blushed painfully and said, with faltering voice, "When he's being married."

IMPUDENT little boy (to a very fat old gentleman, who is trying to get along as fast as he can, but with very indifferent success): "I say, old fellow, you would get on a jolly sight quicker if you would lie down on the pavement and let me roll you along."

"MA," howled a boy, running into the house and approaching his mother, "Willy hit me with a stick!"—"I'll whip Willy," said the mother, abstractedly rolling together a pair of stockings that she had been darning. "No, don't whip him!" cried the urchin. "Don't let him have any supper! I whipped him before he hit me."

MISTRESS: "Well, John, I've nee doot, frae your long experience, ye good occupy the poopit for an afternoon yersel', should an emergency occur!"—Beadle: "Hoots, ay, sir—there's nee difficulty in that; but then where in the hael parish wad ye got anybody qualified to act as beadle?"

A GOLDEN WEDDING: A NEW DEFINITION.—Young Alfred, who is about to get married, said to a friend: "Recollect you are invited to the celebration of my golden wedding, which is to take place in a fortnight."—"What, your golden wedding?"—"Yes, why do you ask? You surely did not expect that I was going to marry for love?"

"THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER" (NOT TENNYSON'S).—"What is your father, my pretty maid?"—"Father's a miller, sir," she said.—"Which is his mill, then, my pretty maid?"—"That over yonder, sir," she said.—"Why, that is the tread-mill, my pretty maid!"—"Six months is his sentence, sir!" she said.

A COUNTRY schoolmaster of the old time was coaching his pupils for the yearly examination by the clergyman of the district. He had before him the junior geography class. "Can any little boy or girl tell me what is the shape of the earth?" To this there was no answer. "Oh, dear, this is sad! Well, I'll give you a token to mind it. What is the shape o' this snuff-box in my han'?"—"Square, sir," replied all.—"Yes; but on Sabbath I change it for a round one. Will you mind that for a token?" Examination-day came, and the junior geography-class was called. "Fine intelligent class this!" said one of the clergymen. "Can any of the little boys or girls tell me what is the shape of the earth?"—Every hand was extended, every head thrown back, every eye flashed with eager excitement. One was singled out with a "You, my little fellow, tell us." "Roond on Sundays an' square all the rest o' the week!"

SOCIETY.

THE DUCHESS OF DUCHESS OF TECZ, with their family, purpose passing the winter at Florence where they have already secured a residence, whence they will proceed from Germany about the middle of next month.

As some curiosity has been expressed with regard to what poem Mr. Tennyson recited to the royal audience who visited the Pembroke Castle at Copenhagen, it may be interesting to our readers to learn that the charming poem of "The Grandmother" was the one selected.

THE DUCHESS OF EDINBURGH, while out driving with three of her children in the neighbourhood of Coburg recently, narrowly escaped a disastrous accident. The horses of her carriage took fright and ran away, being only stopped after the vehicle had been dashed against a tree, whereby a shaft was broken and one of the horses severely hurt. The Duchess and her children happily sustained no injury beyond a severe shaking.

HONORABLES were divided, or, indeed, some say the greater share were intended by the crowd gathered at Liverpool to see the Oregon start, not for Mrs. Langtry, but for Mrs. Cornwallis-West, who, also accompanied by her husband, took passage in the vessel as far as Queenstown, to speed her brother on his voyage to America. Where such notoriously rival "beauties" are concerned who shall decide? but certain it is that Mrs. Cornwallis-West still retains somewhat of her freshness.

THE LATE EARL OF MOUNT CASHELL was "father of the House of Lords" as regards age only. He is succeeded in this honourable distinction by Viscount Eversley, who will complete his ninetieth year in February next. The "father of the House of Lords" is undoubtedly Viscount Falkland, who has had a seat in the Upper House for well-nigh sixty years, just two years longer than the Earl of Chichester and the late Earl of Mount Cashell. Lord Falkland has also held his title for a longer period than any other living peer, he having succeeded to it in 1809.

It happened that some days ago, says a fashionable journal, a certain lovely lady, well-known in fashionable circles, while talking to the Prince of Wales, asked him if he had yet read the last volume of "Court Life Below Stairs." When she had left the Prince it struck her that her question was somewhat indiscreet, as the book plentifully besprinkles His Royal Highness's family with wicked if amusing scandal. When, however, she next met the Prince she ventured to repeat her question. The Prince smiled, and answered her in an epigrammatic sentence. "I have," he said, "and I was never so well acquainted with my family before!"

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, Eaton-square, was filled with a fashionable congregation on the 4th Oct., to witness the marriage of Miss Tracy Lee, granddaughter of Mr. W. Tracy, of New York, and Mr. Ernest, son of Mr. W. and the Hon. Mrs. Beckett Denison. The bride's dress was composed of the richest white satin, the front being covered with lovely point lace. The train was of silver brocade, falling in broad plaits as a mantean decou. She wore a tall veil, fastened with diamond stars, and a brilliant necklace of the same gems. The six bridesmaids' dresses were of soft, creamy, figured net, over satin of the same hue, the front of the skirts being arranged with daffodil satin, plaited in the shape of a fan, and a broad sash of the same, falling over the back of the dress. Lace caps, with a large bow of daffodil-coloured velvet on the left side. Diamond and pearl brooches were presented by the bridegroom, as well as their novel baskets of trailing flowers. A large horseshoe, composed of flowers, was hung over the bride and bridegroom during the *dejeuner*.

STATISTICS.

AMERICAN BEER STATISTICS.—From statistics just published it appears that there has been a remarkable increase of recent years in the consumption of malt liquors in the United States. Last year the production of beer amounted to 525,000,000 gallons, being an average of more than 14 gallons for every inhabitant. In 1861 the total production was only 62,000,000 gallons, so that the increase has been more than eightfold in twenty years, the population in that time having increased about 60 per cent. By way of counterbalancing this, however, the production of distilled liquors has diminished during this period, notwithstanding the great increase of population. It may be noted also that the average beer consumption in the States is still behind that of Belgium, Great Britain, and Germany. The German average is 22 gallons for every head of the population annually. With regard to the production of beer, New York State alone produces one-third of the whole amount, and the business of New York brewers is increasing more rapidly than that of the whole beer interest. Pennsylvania, which is the next State on the list, brews less than one-third the quantity produced by New York. During the past seven years the business of the breweries has more than doubled. Yet in some districts the abstainers from all alcoholic beverages are stronger than ever, and are constantly increasing in numbers.

GEMS.

He who can at all times sacrifice pleasure to duty approaches sublimity.

BEAUTY in women is like the flowers in the spring; but virtue is like the stars of heaven.

BETTER be unborn, than untaught; for ignorance is the root of misfortune.

NEVER be ashamed to own you have been in the wrong; it is but saying, in other words, that you are the wiser to-day than you were yesterday.

WHAT man is there whom contact with a great soul will not exalt? A drop of water upon the petal of a lotus glistens with the splendour of the pearl.

WRONG-DOING is a road that may open fair, but it leads to trouble and danger. Well-doing, however rough and thorny at first, surely leads to pleasant places.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SOUTHERN RICE PUDDING.—One quart of fresh sweet milk, one cup of raw rice, two tablespoonfuls of butter, one cup of sugar, five beaten eggs, one teaspoonful of grated lemon peel, a pinch of cinnamon and the same of mace. Soak the rice in the milk two hours, heat in a farina-kettle until the rice is soft; cream the butter and sugar, stir in the beaten eggs, and whip hard; when the rice is lukewarm put all together and bake in a buttered mould about forty-five minutes; eat warm with sauce or cold with sugar and cream.

OPEN APPLE CUSTARD TART.—Twelve juicy, tart apples, one cup of sugar, grated peel of a lemon, one pint of milk, three eggs and three tablespoonfuls of sugar for the custard, a good pie paste. Put a border of pie crust around the flat brim of a pie-plate without lining the bottom; fill the plate with sliced apple sugared, with lemon peel scattered here and there; put in a little water, cover with a crust, in the centre of which you have marked a circle with a cake-cutter or large tumbler; bake the pie; with a sharp knife cut out the marked circle, lift the centre piece, and fill the inside of the pie with a warm custard made of the milk, eggs and sugar boiled until it begins to thicken; eat cold.

MISCELLANEOUS.

BRITISH SKYLARKS appear to have been successfully acclimated across the Atlantic. Eighty-four birds were set free two years ago on a New Jersey farm, and little by little the larks have scattered till they have now been seen in various parts of the country rearing young, and quite happy, and at home. It is to be hoped that they will not turn out such bad characters as the sparrows.

FLOWER LOVERS among the working classes and the poorer Londoners can now profit by the usual autumn distribution of surplus bedding-out plants from the London parks and State-suburban pleasure-gardens. Application should be made by the clergy, school committees, and others interested in the various parishes, to the superintendent of the nearest park, or of Kew or Hampton Court Gardens.

SUNDAY RECREATION in England seems to be steadily winning its way, notwithstanding all the opposition of Sabbatarians. During the late summer season over 10,000 persons enjoyed Sunday holiday trips in the country through the efforts of the National Sunday League, whose bands also provided nineteen performances in the Regent's Park and eleven in Finsbury Park, attended by thousands of quiet, respectable people. And, by the way, those rigid personages who look on music for the people on Sundays as a grievous snare, and an effectual preventive of church-going, might take a hint from a well-known little Belgian town, where the crowded services show no lack of devotion, particularly amongst the men. There the band kiosque stands at the very cathedral door, and during Sunday ecclesiastical festivals the congregations regularly enjoy capital secular music during the intervals between the services.

HOUSE DECORATION has undergone many changes to meet the ever-varying taste or rather notion of the period. Among the oddities is a new wall covering, which is composed of a loosely-woven, earl-tinted wide canvas, tacked top and bottom to the wall and fastened on the seams with heavy rope, giving the effect of canvas panels; the frieze, composed of a diamond network, of slender rope-netted after the manner of fish seines and tacked at each intersection to the wall by galvanized iron handwrought nails, is decorated by two rows of tassels, composed of revelled rope strands; the dado composed of network of heavier rope is divided into panels by means of ropes; a deep band of dark red, and a band of lighter red, laid under dado and frieze, show through the network with pleasant effect, while the ropes laid around door and window casings, and twisted at the corners and tops into *les foils*, flatly applied, finish this inexpensive, but handsome wall furnishing.

A BABY WALRUS is now housed in the Westminster Aquarium—the second of his kind ever caught alive, so it is believed. The little fellow was captured in Davis Straits by the crew of the steam whaler *Polyne*, who killed his mother as she was floating asleep in the water. As the men neared the old walrus, the baby suddenly appeared, and was taken into the boat; but its piteous cries brought two big male walruses to its help, and the crew had a severe fight before killing the would-be rescuers. On board ship the young walrus soon became very docile, and a perfect plaything of the sailors; while now he is so fond of human society that he growls and grumbles vigorously if left alone. He is about five months old, and is between four and five feet long, with bright scarlet eyes, but is not at present in good condition, having been kept without water on board ship, while he has caught a chill in travelling. Further, he is cutting his tusks, which seems as trying to the little walrus as teething is to a baby, and he greatly enjoys having his gums rubbed. The creature lives entirely on fish, devouring 8 lbs. of mussels daily in default of his favourite food, raw salmon.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

EMMA F.—The marriage of a stepbrother and sister is illegal.

JESUS R.—You should have a frank explanation of your relations. If the young man is disengaged, it is perfectly proper for you to entertain him.

J. P. W.—It is not an easy matter to recover your former position. You had better be perfectly honest with your present admirer. If you do not wish him to continue, let him know it.

R. T. R.—The name California occurs in a Spanish romance, "La Sirena de Esplánian," and probably struck the fancy of the companions of Cortez, who bestowed it on the newly-discovered country.

A. F.—Dude is pronounced as a word of one syllable, with the *s* long as in tube. The word has been so much used and abused that sensible people are ceasing to pronounce it at all.

LOLA.—Why not allow nature to have its course, as the hair on your lip does not amount to a disfigurement, and should not act as a means of lessening the love of the man you intend to marry?

R. B.—If this is the only objection which your parents raise, we think that with patience and constancy you will gain their consent. Do not marry without their approval.

EMILIE GO-BRAGG.—Make up your mind as to the one whom you prefer, and then act with decision. We cannot judge for you. When you have chosen, marry as quickly as possible.

AILMER.—Do not be too forward, but let the gentleman do more of the courting. There is no inappropriateness whatever in anything that you have done; but in future, when a gentleman fails to keep an appointment, write no letters to him until he calls and offers an apology.

W. G.—You had better let the young man alone until he recovers his reason and manners. He owes you an explanation and an apology. Let him seek an opportunity to explain his strange behaviour. In the meantime, entertain other friends.

R. M.—August 27th, 1868, came upon a Thursday. Your writing is very good for a girl of sixteen, but you must take pains to improve it steadily; it would be only passable for a girl of eighteen, and very poor for a young woman of twenty.

B. M. J.—You have no cause for anxiety. You are too young yet to take your sentimental relations with the young gentleman so seriously. We advise you not to be in a hurry to become engaged or to marry. Your writing and spelling are very good. The hair enclosed is fair.

T. R.—Girls of eighteen very often are troubled by this ridiculous notion. You will have more beans in the course of the next few years than you will care to entertain. Strive to render yourself accomplished and easy in your manners. Read good books, and observe the best people.

LIMA.—Your parents can help you to ascertain the young man's intentions, and you should confide fully in your mother. Young ladies make a great mistake in receiving attentions for such a length of time without an engagement.

EMMA G.—The question you ask is one which your lover must take the responsibility of deciding, but you should show wisdom and good feeling in making him understand that if he waited some time in the hope of overcoming his parents' objections he might count upon your patience and faithfulness.

TON.—1. The best way is to have the wood revarnished. 2. The moon and the motion of the earth cause the tide. 3. It is impossible to remove most birthmarks. 4. Lotteries are all to be avoided. 5. Bakers use different kinds of yeast. 6. You write very nicely.

A. R. N.—Yours is certainly a very trying case, but we advise you to endeavour to get on without a return of the presents. To call for their return would have the appearance of a lack of generosity, and probably in any case would not result in their return.

SADIE.—It would be better to get a mutual friend to speak for you and endeavour to find out wherein you have offended. If you have no mutual friend whom you would like to entrust with such a delicate mission, then you may write.

ROBIN REDBREAST.—The expression "Eat your soup," is the customary one. Individual names are pronounced according to the desire and custom of those who have inherited them. There is no rule for the pronunciation of names save custom.

GRANDY.—You must wait until you are again introduced to the young gentleman, unless he finds courage on a fitting occasion to recall his first introduction to your notice. If the young man is very desirous of your acquaintance, he will find some way of making it.

ELISE.—1. By law, parents are entitled to the earnings of their children, of either sex, until they attain their legal majority—twenty-one years. But any parent who continually deprives a daughter of eighteen years of all the proceeds of her labour—and that, too, to her own detriment—would be looked upon by the neighbouring community as brutal and unnaturally cruel. Parental restraint in these cases is often misjudged by the young. Wherever family affection is maintained, mutual concession will be practised

according to the circumstances. 2. To cure or control excessive perspiration of the hands, wash them frequently in cold water, and dry well with a coarse towel. 3. It is very doubtful whether a gentleman personally invited to a party would succeed in finding a lady who would accompany him if she had not been included in the invitation, as her pride would forbid taking such a step. In such cases, all persons should be guided by the maxim, "Go not thither where you know not whether you will be welcome."

LETTIE.—You did the young man an injustice in not allowing him to walk with you, as it is very obvious that the engagement made was unavoidably broken by the death in his family. You should explain this to him when next you meet, and there is no doubt that the course of your true love will again run smooth.

C. R. P.—A gentleman or lady invited to a birthday party is not compelled to bring any present unless he or she shall feel so inclined. It is customary, however, to present some little token of regard to the one in whose honour the party is given. The value of such presents is to be gauged by the length and fulness of the donor's purse.

W. J. R.—If you desire to continue the acquaintance you had better have an interview with the young lady, and ascertain, if possible, the cause of her estrangement. Perhaps you have not proposed, and she has grown tired of waiting for such a dilatory and unsatisfactory suitor. No gentleman has a right to monopolise a young lady without proposing marriage after a proper courtship.

ASTER AND GOLDEN-ROD.

Aster looks with purple eyes

Upward, shy and sweet;
Golden-rod, with kingly mien,
Calm, and gracious, and serene,
Smiles upon her as she leans

To his royal feet.

Smoke has wreathed the autumn hills,

Hazy, dreaming' dun;
Amber glory fills the hollows,
To the southward fly the swallows,
Lazy butterfly slow follows

Or the alumb'rous run.

Aster, with her loving eyes,

Cares not for the dying
Of the languid Indian days—
Of the grand triumphal blaze
In the mystic woodland ways,

Where the bees are flying.

For her king doth love her well—

Tenderly and deep;
Gives her golden crown, and throne,
Sceptre, kingdom, for her own;
Then with kisses, they alone

Fall on happy sleep.

F. D.

S. J. D.—It is very hard for us to advise you. You had better consult your nearest relatives and friends. A wife should not desert her husband under any circumstances; but if her husband deserts her, she can only take means to support herself apart from him. Do everything in your power to reform your husband and bring him to his old ways and affections.

R. D'ALTON.—Your friends may be mistaken in referring to this young man's health. He may be cured. At any rate, since you are engaged, we would advise you to be constant and await results. If the young man is as ill as reported, his disease will soon manifest itself unmistakably. If he is not in any serious danger, your friends will probably consent to your marriage.

CASSIE.—The youngest of the two ladies being acquainted with the circumstances of your proposal and rejection by her sister should not allow that to influence her in giving the love you crave. It seems to be the only objection in the way, and if the case is presented to her in its true light, there is very little doubt but that she can be so convinced, and willingly consent to marriage.

MELLINE.—1. The male visitor is very demonstrative in his leave-taking, and, unless engaged to you, should be checked in his undue familiarity. He should at least crave permission to give you a parting kiss, and even then should act in a manner becoming a gentleman. 2. The motto "Ora e sempre," signifying "Now and always," is from the Italian. 3. Your handwriting is beautiful.

ELFRIDA S.—The name of "Sicilian Vespers" is given to the massacre of the French in Sicily on the day after Easter (March 30), 1282, the signal for the commencement of which was to be the first stroke of the vesper bell. Charles of Anjou, the brother of Louis IX. of France, had deprived the Hohenstaufen dynasty of Naples and Sicily, and parcelled out these kingdoms among his French followers. His cruelty, oppressive taxation, and the brutality of those surrounding him, excited the Sicilians to a revolt, which culminated in one of the cruelest massacres in the world's history. On the evening of Easter Monday the people of Palermo, enraged (so the story goes) at a gross act perpetrated by a French soldier, precipitated the revolt before the day appointed. They rose against their oppressors, and put to death every man, woman, and child of them, not even sparing those Italians and Sicilians who had married Frenchmen. Shortly after

Messina and other towns joined in the revolt, and it was not long before the insurrection became general, the French being hunted like wild beasts. They were even dragged from the churches, where they vainly thought themselves secure from violence. It is stated that the people of Palermo alone killed 6,000 of them. Only one Frenchman is known to have been spared. The Governor of Messina succeeded in escaping with his garrison, having been warned beforehand.

BETTINA.—You had better seek your happiness through and with your husband. Do not allow anything to distract you from him. He will be more likely to yield to your wish to go to the housekeeping than to remain very long where you are unhappy. But take courage; endeavour to be cheerful and pleasant, and make him love you more and more. Men yield everything to those who love and please them.

BELLA F.—You can safely trust to the good counsel of your parents in this matter. Do not anticipate a contingency which may never occur. Wait until you are asked. From your letter we conclude that you are very young yet, and have plenty of time in which to be courted and to decide upon your future mate. You may entirely misjudge your aunt's motives.

R. M. B.—You do wrong to encourage this young man to come so often, and in permitting yourself to become interested in him. If the intimacy continues, you will become alienated from your husband and suffer the consequences. We advise you to withdraw yourself as quickly as possible from such a dangerous influence. Clasp to your husband. He is your true friend and anchor.

DORA S.—Our advice to you is to wait for several years before making any effort in opposition to the advice of your friends. Most young ladies who aspire to become actresses, and study under the best teachers, fail to succeed. Very few possess the requisite natural gifts and fewer still are able to undergo the trials and hardships incident to training for the stage. It is a long and difficult path, beset with peril to the young and inexperienced. The profits and advantages are much less than your fancy pictures.

JOHN R.—You may safely continue to visit the young lady for several years to come without ascertaining the state of her heart. At your ages there is little danger of serious damage to peace of mind in consequence of misdirected affection. Youth takes these mishaps easily: You are too young to become engaged or to visit a young lady of fifteen with a view to marriage. Do not be troubled, but possess your soul with patience.

EMILY.—It is very difficult for a young lady to obtain employment for her leisure hours, unless she possesses some especial accomplishment for gift. Millinery and dressmaking, and sewing of all descriptions are the best paid of all the ordinary employments of women. If you have musical or literary attainments, you might possibly find some employment in teaching or writing. If you understand French or German, you may also obtain pupils in these languages. Painting, embroidery, and fancy work are well remunerated if done tastefully.

M. N. T.—To pickle peaches, throw them, few at a time, in hot lye. Let them remain in it not longer than three minutes. Then put them in clear water, and wipe off all the lye. Make a strong brine, lay them in, and let them stand for two or three days. Take them out, wash, and wipe them. Place them in jars, and cover them with white wine, vinegar and loaf sugar, in the proportion of one quart of vinegar to one pound of sugar. Put them in glass jars, cover close, and keep in a dry, cool place.

C. R. N.—Cesar and Lucretia Borgia belonged to a noble family in the middle ages, and fill a large space in Italian history. According to the later historians the reputation of Lucretia has been made to suffer for the crimes of her brother and father, she herself being a cultivated and intelligent woman; morally, neither much better nor worse than the majority of the women of the corrupt society in which she lived. The fullest biography of Cesar and Lucretia Borgia, in English, is that by Gilbert, but you can get much information about them in any encyclopedia.

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